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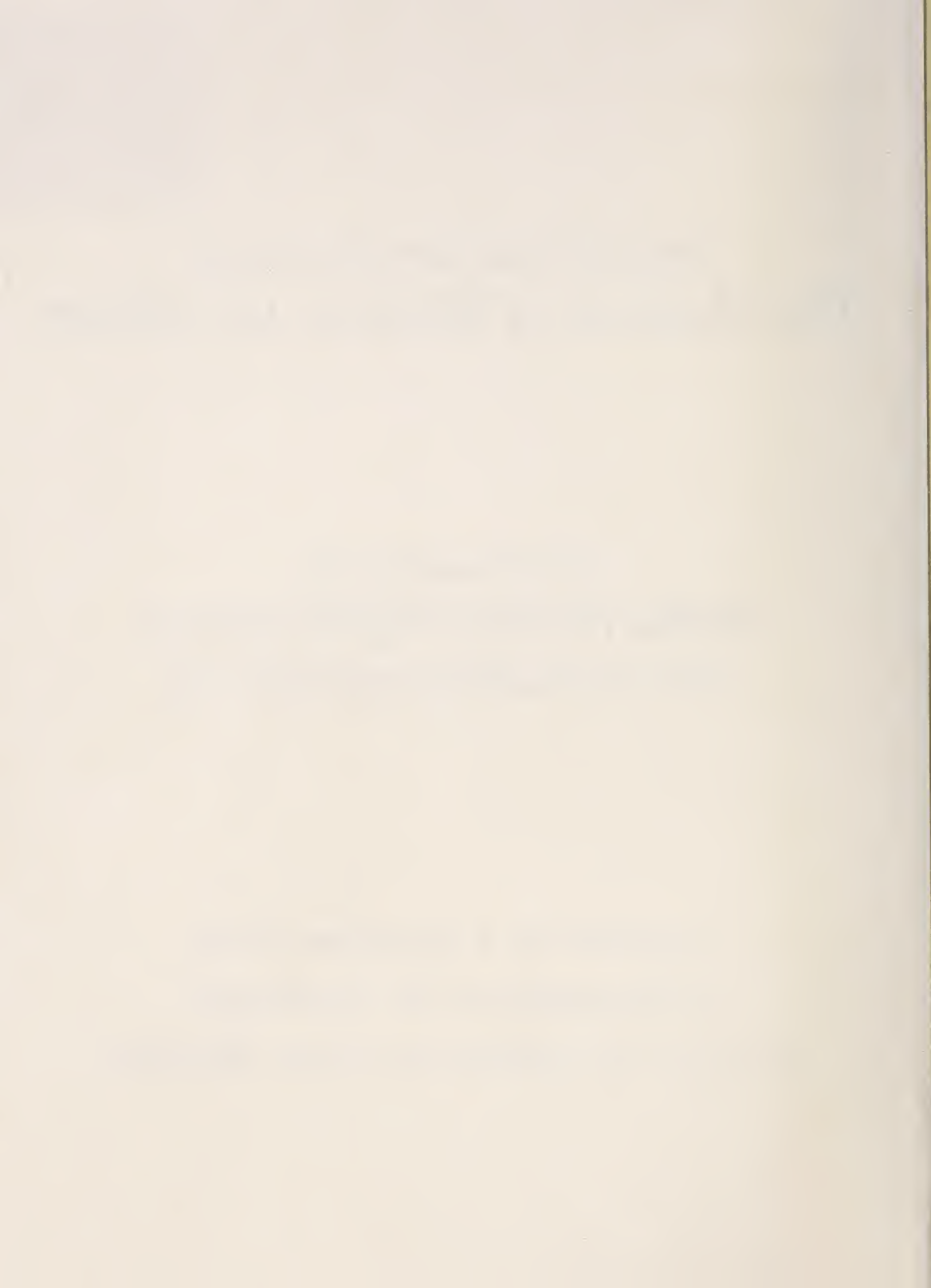
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CINEMA QUARTERLY

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

Volume 3, No. 1

AUTUMN

1934

THREAT TO NON-FLAM. While the ordinary public performance of films printed on standard inflammable stock is strictly controlled by regulations framed to secure public safety but also used to enforce an undefined but far reaching measure of censorship, the exhibition of non-inflammable film, as used with all sub-standard projectors, has so far remained free from official interference. There are indications, however, that this freedom may be short-lived. The Home Office is said to be considering the introduction of new regulations which would bring non-flam film virtually under the same restrictions as apply to standard stock.

Such a move would have a disastrous effect on the development of the use of the film in education, social welfare, the public services, and in every sphere where it can serve the interests of the community. The value of the film as a means of education and instruction is being increasingly recognized, and numerous schools and educational organizations throughout the country have already installed apparatus which may now become unusable.

The proposed regulations, it is understood, are intended to lessen the physical danger to public safety, apart from the risk of fire, which it is feared may be present at uncontrolled exhibitions. It would be difficult, however, to trace any case of accident or disturbance causing injury to any member of the public as a result of using safety film. It would appear, therefore, that if the regulations are to be as stringent as has been hinted, the intention is either censorial or is to satisfy interests opposed to the spread of non-theatrical exhibitions and the increase of advertising shows organized by large commercial firms.

To endanger the unrestricted development of the sub-standard film, particularly in the field of education, in order to eliminate a particular type of performance unwelcome to certain other vested interests, would be an act of supreme folly. Until the official text of the proposed regulations is made public there is little that can be done to organize opposition, but every one concerned with the use of safety film should be primed in readiness to take joint action in appealing against the introduction of any measures which would place unnecessary restrictions on the exhibition of films used for

educational and cultural ends. All film societies, educational organizations and other bodies interested in the development of the film should immediately consider the possibility of co-operating in a nation-wide campaign to safeguard their interests and to oppose any encroachment on the existing liberties of the community.

SENSE AND CENSORSHIP. Bernard Shaw in his preface to "The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet" said possibly everything that need be said against the bourgeois principles of censorship; but since then there has grown up a complex system of film censorship arising out of a network of regulations created for entirely different purposes, and it is as well that the tyrannical implications of this system should be kept constantly before the public. Ivor Montagu has already dealt with the political aspect of the question in a pamphlet which showed how the Government, by working through an "unofficial" board of censors appointed by the film trade, could use its control without the burden of responsibility. In "The Censor, the Drama and the Film" (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.) Dorothy Knowles now examines the entire field. Her closely documented marshalling of facts is an effective exposure of the inefficiency of a system which winks at crude pornography and unhesitatingly mutilates works of artistic integrity and serious intention.

While we may agree that some form of control is necessary to prevent the outbreak of public disorder and to guard children against undesirable influences, it is against all radical principles of liberty that every film and every audience should be subject to restrictions intended to control mass re-action in the conglomerated interests of state, society, and religion.

Unfortunately the attitude of certain film producers, whose pictures are little better than animated versions of a particular kind of Continental post card, makes it difficult for any revision in censorship regulations to be considered. It is these muck-merchants, who fortunately are not the entire film trade, who have brought into existence the legions of decency and the countless busybodies whose unintelligent interference the rest of cinema could well do without. Even the news-reels, which have always remained free from supervision, have in recent months so violated every standard of decency in their exploitation of sensationalism that they will have only themselves to blame if they are brought under official control. Paul Rotha's indictment of their policy, contained elsewhere in this issue, should be read as a solemn warning.

The enlightened age in which we can expect complete freedom from censorial interference is still far off, but it is the task of the film societies to see that, as specialized audiences of intelligent people, they secure the right to show films free from the niggling restrictions intended for morons.

THE FILM INSTITUTE. The first annual report of the British Film Institute, which has now a membership of nearly two hundred, shows that a considerable amount of work has been undertaken during the year in setting up machinery which, if properly handled, could be used to tackle some of the more important problems which call for attention. Among the "advisory panels" which have been formed is one on sub-standard films, and as it is largely composed of members of the B.K.S. and apparatus manufacturers its policy with regard to the proposed new non-flam regulations will be awaited with interest. There is also a panel on documentary films, but so far not one on news-reels. In view of recent tendencies it would be exciting to see what would happen if such a panel were formed.

SINCLAIR-EISENSTEIN AGAIN. Upton Sinclair and Sol Lesser are about to release a second film, called *Day of Death*, "rescued" from Eisenstein's Mexican mileage, and Seymour Stern and his storm-troops are already at their heels. The days of protesting and "debunking," writes Stern, are now over, and the future of the campaign lies in an effort to negotiate with Sinclair for a return of the negative to Eisenstein. If this is ever achieved Stern will have earned our admiration for bringing to a happy conclusion one of the most sordid chapters in the history of art.

DEATH OF JEAN VIGO. Cinema is not sufficiently rich in genius that it can afford to lose in early youth one of its most promising directors and serious experimenters. Jean Vigo, whose *Atalante* and *Zéro de Conduite* were exciting essays in imaginative realism, after a serious illness in Paris not helped by his burning enthusiasm for cinema, has passed away, leaving the ranks of the independents—in whose hands he believed lay the entire artistic future of the film—poorer by one of their most original and brilliant artists. A melancholy interest will be attached to the exhibition of *Zéro de Conduite*, which is to be shown by the Film Society during the coming season.

NORMAN WILSON.

VOLUME THREE

THE THIRD Volume of *Cinema Quarterly* commences with the present number. Copies are obtainable through any bookshop, but if any difficulty is experienced an annual subscription (Great Britain, 4s. 6d.; Abroad, 7s. 6d.) should be sent to the Manager, *Cinema Quarterly*, 24 N.W. Thistle Street Lane, Edinburgh, 2. Binding cases for Volume Two are now ready, price 3s. 6d. each, postage 6d. extra. No further expense is necessary as these are self-adjusting. Cases for Volume Three, in which each copy may be placed as issued, are also ready.

BASE NEWS-REEL SENSATIONALISM

IT SEEMS likely that important issues with regard to the function and scope of the news-reel may at last be brought to a head by the widely-shown item of the assassination of King Alexander of Jugoslavia. On several recent occasions it has been evident that the news-reel companies' rival efforts for sensationalism would sooner or later provoke public indignation. The 'Outrage at Marseilles' provides that required incentive.

In at any rate one version of the incident, the picture has been edited in such a way as to heighten the effect of the occurrence ; by cutting to build suspense and by inserting details (a battered straw hat ; a hand with a gun slinking through the crowd) which may or may not be authentic. It is surely the news-reel's task to present as accurate as possible a record of an event. As soon as it begins to dramatize, to construct an incident creatively by cutting for increased effect, news-reel encroaches into the documentary field. Once news-reel adopts documentary approach, almost any event can be given implications to suit any point of view. In this age of social and political unrest, such manipulation holds many dangers.

The inclusion of the Assassination item in ordinary programmes, along with Colour Symphonies and amusement films, is causing wide comment. As pointed out elsewhere in this issue, it defeats the entertainment purpose of cinema, for no studio-made story can stand up to this vivid moment of real life. It suggests that there is scope for extension of news-theatres and that news-reels, except those of the most uncontroversial topics, should be removed from the general theatres. Not for one moment is it implied that records of such events should be suppressed. It is important that they should be exhibited to permit the public to draw its own conclusions. But it is equally important that they should be available only to those who desire to see them and not inserted in the ordinary programmes.

Such exploitation policy is not new. Recently we have seen human suffering literally forced before cameras and microphone, with the participants actually demonstrating their unwillingness to make public their private emotions. There can be no other purpose behind this than exploitation for profit. I do not blame the news-reel cameramen. They have courage and skill and are only obeying instructions. I accuse the policy behind some news-reels and deplore their lack of social responsibility. I condemn the minds that adopt the attitude that there are incidents—be it pit-disaster, shipwreck or strike riots—which can be exploited for gain by laying special emphasis on the brutality or pathos of the occasion. It is a wholly despicable approach to reality.

PAUL ROTH.

EVASIVE DOCUMENTARY

DAVID SCHRIRE

It is a queer commentary on socially conscious film critics on whom we have come to rely for judgments unaffected by economic compulsives, that they have scrupulously refrained from turning the full force of their condemnation on a new tendency in cinema. In reality, this tendency is not new but its growing popularity and pseudo freshness give it the character of novelty and experimentation. Idyllic or evasive documentary of which Flaherty is the arch priest, is beginning to carve out for itself a well-nigh unassailable place in cinema.

Except for Grierson's far too kindly articles in *Cinema Quarterly* and various *obiter dicta* on the subject of documentary, little criticism has been directed against this new menace. A whole-hearted full-blooded frontal attack, showing its dangers, enlarging on the consequences of such so called "escapism" and revealing—didactically if necessary—the correct orientation for documentary pictures is urgently needed. That it has not already been done is an omission that may yet prove fatal to the true interests of documentary.

Possibly these critics imagine that they would be doing the cause of documentary a disservice by exposing and attacking "escapism." They must think that, as this form is after all an aspect of documentary, a stepping stone to what they really want to see established, it would be bad policy and tactics to give it a kick in the pants: that it is after all a solid box-office draw and is acquainting the public and the producing companies with an idea of the potentialities of documentary pictures.

This is a dangerous argument for it rests on a fundamental theoretical fallacy. It premises that that which differentiates a documentary picture from others is the use of natural material, and the use of natural material alone. In point of fact pictures by Flaherty *et hoc genus omne* have no real title to be styled "documentary." To do so is to water down the essential purpose of documentary, abort its function and render impotent its *raison d'être*. The words "idyllic"

or "evasive" as applied to that type of picture are preferable to the term "escapism." For "escapism" lays the emphasis on and evaluates the picture in subjective terms of the director's mind; and not as an objective sociological phenomenon.

Idyllic documentary is documentary in decay, documentary with pernicious anæmia. It is the wax moth of true documentary. It changes the nature of documentary, gives it a new quality, a new form. It may be realistic, deal with actual people and things; but realism inheres not alone in the material used but in the material *plus* treatment. It is the purpose to which a film dealing with natural material is put that classifies it and not the material employed.

It is necessary to define what we mean by documentary before we can solicit the agreement of readers or proceed to discuss the pictures of Flaherty. Documentary or documentary pictures may be defined as the imaginative delineation through the medium of films employing natural material of current social struggle and conflict; the word "social" is used in its widest sense, embracing political, economic and cultural aspects of modern life. This definition follows from a generally accepted dictum that if cinema is to mean anything it must serve a purpose beyond itself, have some justification other than its own very medium. If that is true, there is one purpose above all others that is of paramount importance to-day—that of making a living. But it is not man's relationship with nature and the forces of production in our modern world which is the true subject of documentary, not the Industrial Britain or Cinemagazine approach. Production to-day is adequate for our needs. The struggle is in a different sphere. It is the relationship of man with his fellow man within the existing economic structure of society, his struggle to abolish hunger and unemployment, earn a decent wage and, finally, equate distribution with production—these problems are the taut sinews of modern capitalism. Man's struggle with nature to wrest from her his means of subsistence has lost importance to-day. It is his struggle for the right to divert what he has produced to the interests of humanity that is the vital question. And it is there that documentary has its justification, in truthfully depicting modern economic relationships, in rendering audiences conscious of their interests, of their economic claims, aware of their remedy. That is the true sphere of documentary if it is to serve the most urgent purpose beyond itself.

In the light of the above definition let us consider the position of Flaherty. We are accepting the excellence of his cutting, his fine photography and that superb feeling he has for cinema. These formal attributes are admitted without question. They merely make more regrettable the loss that documentary has suffered by his idyllicism.

Flaherty reveals a joy, an unholy pleasure in his subject matter; he revels in it. And its distinguishing quality is a deliberate turn to the fringes of civilization or to an anthropological present, a present for which the Industrial Revolution need never have taken place; and romanticism and "lo, the noble savage" pervades the whole, wraps it in the old miasmal mist of irrelevancy and distraction. In Flaherty's world of cinema there are no such things as machinery and smoke-grimed factories, hotels and labour camps, unemployment and hunger, tenement houses and mansions. But the primitive Esquimeaux, bronzed Polynesians, virgin snows and coconut trees, surf and elemental storms are the normal material for his celluloid. And it is not as if he is a sensitive soul who cannot bear to contemplate the misery and pain of our modern economic life; Flaherty is no emotional vegetarian. For he can face and shoot individual pain with an all too facile relish (*vide* the tattooing scenes in *Moana*). It is just that he is a throwback, an artistic atavism to whose apologia "I like this idyllism. It satisfies my artistic conscience," there is no reply. For "aesthetic" individualism cannot be overcome by rational argument. The only course to follow is to give the "artistic" product of such people the tribute of our condemnation.

Flaherty is an institution. He rushes to the bucolic present for material to fashion into his exquisitely finished product. Our economic system breeds such types as this by the score and their film prototypes are merely logical reflections of their role in every aspect of modern culture.

Their threat is twofold; in the first place, they are conditioning the mind of the public to this evasive idea of documentary. They are no longer isolated. Numbers of imitators have already sprung up and "mocumentary" is beginning to dig itself in as a normal item in supporting programmes. Secondly, they have led cinemagnates to imagine that documentary deals either with the noble savage in his native environment, or is a spineless, elegant reflection of the pleasant trivialities of modern life. And may the Lord preserve documentary from the support of the commercial producing companies!

Documentary will have a hard fight to establish itself. It is already probably too late to break the title that Flaherty pictures have to the word. Another one may have to be coined. That we have assisted "mocumentary" in establishing itself is unfortunate. But let us now realize, clearly and finally, that the pictures of Flaherty etc., are hindrances to the growth of documentary; that not only must we withdraw all support, not only cease damning with faint praise, but that the time is over-ripe to attack evasive documentary for the menace that it really is.

JOHN GRIERSON REPLIES

FLAHERTY with his *Man of Aran* has caused almost as much division of critical opinion as *Thunder Over Mexico*. David Schrire's article puts the principal objections: that Flaherty is a romantic escapist and that the film is only so much idyllic fudge. As I originally, I think, invented the word "escapism," and used it on Flaherty in the very early days of *Cinema Quarterly*, it may seem scurvy in me to double-cross a supporter. But I do not agree with this estimate either of Flaherty or *Man of Aran*.

In the first place one may not—whatever one's difference in theory—be disrespectful of a great artist and a great teacher. Flaherty taught documentary to create a theme out of natural observation. He brought to it for the first time a colossal patience in the assembly of effects. And this was necessary before the discursive travelogue could become a dramatic—or dialectical—analysis of event.

It is of course reasonable for a later generation of film-makers to want a documentary tougher, more complex, colder and more classical, than the romantic documentary of Flaherty. It is fitting that it should want a documentary in which both material and theme are found in our own social organization and not in literary idyll. But there are considerations one must watch carefully. The first one is that Flaherty was born an explorer, and that is where his talent is: to be accepted on its own ground. It would be foolish, as Professor Saintsbury once remarked, to complain of a pear that it lacks the virtue of the pomegranate.

I call it futile, too, to ask of Flaherty an article which cannot under commercial conditions be possible. Some of us can make do with a thousand pounds on a production, and we buy our independence accordingly. Flaherty's method involves the larger backing of the commercial cinema. He has of necessity to obey its rules. These rules are not always articulated but they are understood. Whatever Flaherty's *carte blanche* on the Aran Islands, the controlling factor, you may take it, was that he did not want to let his masters down. This factor was undoubtedly responsible for making his film more sensational and more spectacular than was expected. It was responsible for making it spectacular at the expense of elements—possibly deeper elements—which under other conditions he might have included.

But rather than complain of the result, I wonder that so much was done within commercial limitation. No English film has done so much. Not half a dozen commercial films in the year can compare with *Man of Aran* in simple feeling and splendid movement. I am all for congratulating Flaherty on pushing the commercial

film brilliantly to its limit. I am all for commending his fortitude in yet another sickening encounter with commercialism.

It is good to remember when these arguments arise how—till the gold plaque came in from Venice—lacking in unanimity was the first enthusiasm. Even *Man of Aran* was too difficult and too high-brow for the trade generally, and might have fizzled indeed if Flaherty has not gone out himself with his collection of Islanders to ballyhoo it into appreciation. It plainly is a difficult world to manage anything at all in, when the artist has to turn showman in self defence.

Flaherty not only had to make the film but he had to sell it. Wardour Street, which knows how to sell its own line of damarroids, has never the belief nor the salesmanship, to sell anything different. Where, as in the case of France, the *Man of Aran* job was left to the usual commercial agents, the film was cut to a five-reeler and billed below the line as a subsidiary feature. As they congratulate themselves on their gold plaque, Gaumont-British should pause to consider this strange anomaly.

A last consideration, which Flaherty himself urges strongly. *Man of Aran* has been blamed for distorting the life of the Islanders, for going back into time for its shark hunting and its dangers, for telling a false story. But is it unreasonable for the artist to distil life over a period of time and deliver only the essence of it? Seen as the story of mankind over a period of a thousand years, the story of the Arans is very much this story of man against the sea and woman against the skyline. It is a simple story, but it is an essential story, for nothing emerges out of time except bravery. If I part company with Flaherty at that point, it is because I like my braveries to emerge otherwise than from the sea, and stand otherwise than against the sky. I imagine they shine as bravely in the pursuit of Irish landlords as in the pursuit of Irish sharks.

In the commercial cinema, however, sharks are definitely preferable. You can stuff them and show them in a Wardour Street window. You can even cut them down, as G.-B. did, to fit the window. You cannot, unfortunately, do the same with Irish landlords. That is the case for Flaherty.

RECORD OF SUBSTANDARD FILMS

IN RESPONSE to numerous enquiries *Cinema Quarterly* is compiling a record of sub-standard films of a documentary, educational, or experimental nature. Both amateur and commercial producers are invited to submit details of such films, including contents, size, length, and also rates and conditions of hiring.

ITALY'S "INTERNATIONAL" INSTITUTE

G. F. NOXON

ON THE Via Nomentana outside the ancient Papal walls of Rome, lies a large property surrounded by a high sun-baked wall and watched over by a number of rather embarrassed-looking armed guards. Somehow, in this quiet Roman suburb they feel themselves hopelessly out of place. They guard the Villa Torlonia. Within the walls there are actually two villas, the one elegant, the other a trifle down-at-heel. The former villa is the home of Benito Mussolini and the latter is the seat of that somewhat obscure organization—The International Institute of Educational Cinematography. The I.I.E.C. sits, as it were, in Mussolini's back yard. It was founded on the Duce's direct instigation in 1929 in affiliation with the League of Nations. It has therefore an official link with the League and flies League colours over its international business. It is not however financed by the League but by Signor Mussolini through the Italian Government which pays to the tune of one million lira per annum to maintain this so called international "Institute." At the foundation appeals were of course made to other governments for finance, but contributions were scanty and rare. Great Britain, America, France and Germany have given nothing. Poland, Hungary and Roumania have made minute contributions. The finance of the Institute remains 99 per cent. Italian.

Anyone who has the least knowledge of Signor Mussolini's political methods will ask immediately why he chooses to foot the bill for this Institute, and anyone who knows Mussolini's methods well will at once find the answer. Wherever the original idea of an International Institute of Educational Cinematography cropped up, it was and still is a brilliant conception. Mussolini's move to give the idea some sort of concrete shape, which in the boom year of '29 passed almost unnoticed as just one more extravagance of the expansionist mentality, now appears as further proof of his political astuteness.

It is curious that the realization of the cinema as a potent medium for propaganda seems to come naturally to one kind of politician and to escape the perception of others entirely. To Mussolini it was obvious that the investment of a mere million lira a year was a cheap price to pay for the control of the I.I.E.C., which, while

flying League of Nations colours, would yet remain his own propaganda organization, both internally and internationally, by simple reason of his financial control.

To give the Institute the requisite International flavour a Governing Body was formed. Governors were chosen from a variety of countries and the token to Internationalism was paid. The altogether estimable gentlemen who form this governing body convene once a year at Rome in the glorious autumn weather for which that city is justly famed. They pass resolutions and they make recommendations, they take drives into the Castelli Romani, are enthusiastic over the sunsets of the late year, are entertained at garden parties. It is all very charming and the Governors return to their various homelands with feelings of quiet satisfaction.

But what of the Institute's work throughout the year? What sort of structure is there behind the façade of its long name? Is it a solid useful building really serving the cause of an international cinema?

The chief work of the Institute is the publication of a monthly review in five languages. Numerous periodicals are read and notes are made. There is a library. There is much cataloguing. There is a great deal of idling.

The staff of this "International Institute" is composed largely of Italians. Many of them hold unabashed sinecures by reason of party influence. Few have the least idea what a film is and they feel no compulsion to instruct themselves. Then there are the "editors" of the Review: An Italian Editor, a French Editor, a Spanish Editor, a German Editor, an English Editor. These gentlemen are editors only in name; actually, they spend the greater part of their time translating and have practically no say in the make-up of the Review. They have no control whatsoever of the policy. They are part of the international façade. The policy of the Institute and the Review is under the sole control of Signor Luciano de Feo, the Director, who is doubtless inspired on issues of importance by communications from above. The Institute is not located in Mussolini's back yard for nothing. De Feo is not a newcomer on the Fascist scene. He was at one time Director of the Italian State Film Organization—LUCE, which supplies carefully vetted news-reels to all Italian cinemas. It is known that he enjoys the Duce's favour and is well established in the party.

Apart from the Review, de Feo has a couple of hobby horses—"the international exchange of educational films" and the compilation of an international encyclopædia of cinema terms. He has likewise signified the Institute's interest in the formation of an international catalogue of worthy educational films—worthiness to be decided by the I.I.E.C. The gentlemen of the Governing Body

can find nothing to quarrel with in these pious and useful aspirations. They make their yearly pilgrimage and remark, as the English member of the Governing Body once remarked—"After all, he who pays the piper calls the tune."

It is true that de Feo's tune is a trifle weak. The Review is frankly so badly put together that, even though it does from time to time contain good work, few can bother to sort out the grain from so much chaff. The Directors' efforts in other directions have met with little success—with one notable exception: the Venice Exhibition film show is first rate travel ballyhoo for Italy. And here lies the danger: Italian control of an "International Institute," with Italian aims behind it, not only fails to advance the truly international purposes of the cinema but serves to block the path for a real international organization. The general ineffectiveness of the I.I.E.C. precludes it doing any serious harm and must incidentally give Mussolini the idea that his million lira might be otherwise more ably administered to the same purpose. And it is just possible that our own carefully organized national Film Institute and other similar national organizations may be deceived into co-operation with the I.I.E.C. through ignorance of its real nature.

The intention of the I.I.E.C., is not educational but political. It is not an international institute in any sense: it merely exploits internationalism for its own national propaganda purposes.

66 FILMS IN A LIDO HOTEL

P. M. PASINETTI

AN EXHIBITION of Cinematographic Art was held in Venice at the Hotel Excelsior, Lido, in August. I understand that it was a great financial success and a great asset to Venice as a means of attracting tourists; but, officially, the attraction of tourists was not a concern of the organizers and, although the circumstances frequently made it difficult, I attempted to keep in mind that I was attending an exhibition of art.

The Exhibition lasted twenty-seven days and sixty-six films were presented. These were generally of the previous year and the majority of them had been shown in Britain. In Italy, foreign films

are not at present shown in their original languages, nor are there cinemas which specialize in foreign films, such as the Academy in London, though I understand several small ones are to be founded now. Films are shown in dubbed versions and the effect is often cruel. Thus one of the attractions of the Exhibition for us in Italy was that the films were shown in their original versions.

My first impressions of the programmes were not favourable, as it was immediately clear that the organizers did not intend to present only films of outstanding artistic importance. Much shoddy stuff was included in the programmes. Two major films and several shorts were presented each evening, with supplementary morning and afternoon performances on the last days. The most interesting Soviet films were presented privately in the forenoons.

As has been announced, the Mussolini prize for a foreign film was awarded to Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, while the prize for an Italian film was given to *Teresa Confalonieri*, an episode of our Risorgimento, a heroic episode of which we are proud, even if the pride does not extend to the film. Such films as *Man of Aran* and Machaty's *Ekstase* gave me a thrill of æsthetic pleasure, even if I had seen the former previously in Ireland; but it was maddening to find included in an Exhibition of Cinematographic Art *Death Takes a Holiday*—its performance being announced as the first in Europe which, even if it had been true, was hardly an honour; and *Going Hollywood* with Marion Davies, the star meanwhile appearing in the hall of the hotel, signing post-cards. Fan worship was by no means absent from this Exhibition of Cinematographic Art.

So many films seen within a short time provided special opportunities for comparison, particularly from the point of view of national characteristics in production. I do not bring it forward as a new observation, but the decadence of American production was one of the things most apparent at the Exhibition. The American system with its standardization, fear of experiment and lavish expenditure on duplicating what has been previously found successful, is failing. At a time when the historical film was regarded as suspect, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* appeared as an independent and courageous production; while *The Private Life of Don Juan*, notoriously inferior to the first film, seems to have been produced in accord with the American system of repeating what has been already found successful. The state of American production to-day shows how dangerous that system is. Let Europeans use it as an experience *in corpore vili*. *Lot in Sodom* was the most interesting example of American film art. It was amusing to find an experiment in abstract coming from America! Very few could follow it, but all admired its technical perfection. The commercial film was much more widely represented, but the choice of pictures was often remarkably unin-

telligent. I hope that on a future occasion, a committee shall not ask the different nations to send whatever they please, but that an approach will be made direct to the production firms for definite films. Moreover, we would prefer to see ten films rather than sixty-six.

European production appears to be most hopeful when it is not under the control of the commercially-minded who regard film-making merely as a method of making money. Such small countries as Czechoslovakia and Holland often provide the best examples of independent and courageous artistic production.

There is nothing to prevent anyone having a thousand films shown in the garden of a grand hotel, without any significance attached to the selection, the exhibition intended to provide only a pleasant pastime. But it is a different matter when such a series of performances is described as an International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art. Film art is not a definition to be treated lightly. The directors whose work is presented—and the organizers of the Exhibition themselves—should be people who already have some standing in the sphere of film art, or whose work at the Exhibition is going to reveal their worthiness. The programmes might be arranged to reflect aspects of the development of the film: comparisons for example, between primitive and contemporary films, obtained by short and representative excerpts. Similarly, the outstanding film artists ought not to be forgotten and programmes could be devoted to the story of Pabst's genius or of Mamoulian's cleverness, or to the career of any other prominent director. Of the *Going Hollywood* type of film, ten yards of celluloid could be selected to show *what the film is not to be*.

The responsibility of the organizers grows when they publicize the Exhibition and attract many people. Under such conditions, the audience will include not only students of the cinema but a large percentage who are cinematographically uneducated. The character of the exhibition is particularly to be regretted when, as at present, education in film matters is spreading. That education at present is not at all complete, as was shown at the Lido during the performance of Rutten's *Dood Water* (Holland), but undoubtedly people are developing their film taste, are able to distinguish the work of the major directors and are becoming familiar with film technicalities. It is unfortunate that lovers of good cinema should have been deceived by an exhibition so pompously announced and should have been again confronted with the invasion of industry into art when they thought that, for once, they could have shed their worries on this score and left them at the entrance of the Hotel Excelsior like a wet umbrella.

EXPERIMENTS IN COUNTERPOINT

HERBERT READ

EVER since sound became a practical adjunct of the films, the commercial producers seem to have had no other desire than to use it in the interests of an ever faithful naturalism. Indeed, naturalism is the unintelligent standard of all the arts still controlled by people other than artists. In the arts of painting, sculpture and poetry, where the artist is an individualist in supreme control of the process of production, the bourgeois ideals of the nineteenth century are a thing of the past. It is only in industrial art, and in arts like the theatre and the film, in which the control is financial or capitalist, that the creative activity is inhibited or distorted in the interests of ideals and policies external to art.

The comparison of the film with the art of painting is particularly instructive, because in so far as both are visual arts, and both arts which use a two-dimensional surface for their projection and presentation, their problems are to that extent identical. Naturally the complete difference of technique soon puts an end to the value of such comparisons, but even in technique it is worth insisting on the actual plasticity of the camera's material (not so very far removed from the plasticity of paint) ; and even, on the other hand, on the concreteness of the painter's materials. Both arts, we might say, are concerned with the arrangement of solids in relation to light.

Painting, in the last fifty or sixty years, has completely liberated itself from the naturalistic convention ; it is safe to say that there is not a living painter of distinction in the world to-day who regards the exact imitation of natural effects as the aim of his art. Even the Academicians pay their tribute to some mild form of impressionism ; whilst at the other extreme the most talented painters in Europe have completely divorced their art from any conventional notion of reality, and attempt to create a new order of reality. That new order may be suggested by the natural world, or may be of an intuitive or hallucinatory origin ; but essentially it is a reality parallel to the existing order of things. Some painters call it a super-reality (*surréalité*), but admittedly that is rather an arrogant assumption ; it is sufficient to call it another order of reality.

The potentiality of the film (once it becomes the mode of expression of the artist) is already great purely as film ; but the

invention of sound-recording" apparatus has more than doubled that potentiality. For it means the creation, not merely of a realistic adjunct, adding the sensation of hearing to the sensation of sight as a synchronized reproduction of reality ; but actually the creation of another dimension in the art of the cinema. The independence of the sound strip, both in recording and montage, means that sight and sound can be combined in a counterpoint which is entirely independent of realism. Rudolf Arnheim expresses the idea neatly : " The principle of sound film demands that picture and sound shall not do the same work simultaneously but that they shall share the work—the sound to convey one thing and the picture another, and the two jointly to give a complete impression."*

Arnheim, in his interesting chapter on " Asynchronism," discusses some of the possibilities and dangers of this new technical device. A certain welding-together of incongruities only ends, as he points out, in a chaotic pseudo unity. There must be a certain notional or imaginative unity behind every combination—a simple illustration would be the combination of the sound of rhythmic machinery and a marching army ; the machinery might alternate with, or even be superimposed upon, the sound of a marching song. But obviously such combinations are going to call for great aesthetic tact—indeed, for a new type of film artist, as much musician as producer, who builds up symphonies of sight and sound.

In one of those few laboratories of experiment which exist in the world—the G.P.O. Film Unit, which has succeeded to the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit—John Grierson and Alberto Cavalcanti have been carrying out experiments in this direction which are of the greatest interest. They are limited by the kind of film they are required to produce—documentary and propaganda—but even within these limits they have shown how usefully this counterpoint of sight and sound can be developed. Perhaps the most ambitious of these experiments is a comedy, *Pett and Pott*, directed by Alberto Cavalcanti. Here a large variety of asynchronous devices are used to produce special effects. In addition to what might be regarded as the normal device—an accompaniment of music which induces a sympathetic mood, there are suggestions of a more complicated symphonic construction ; the interweaving of direct naturalistic sounds with the formal musical rhythm—at one point, for example, the meaningless clatter of a rough-and-tumble fight is reinforced by the strains of a drum-and-fife band, and the fight proceeds to the rhythm of the music. More original is the formalized chorus used, for example, in a scene which depicts a suburban train, full of identical suburbanites reading identical evening papers. They begin to read the headings of the latest suburban sensation—a robbery

* Film : London, Faber & Faber, 15s.



From Basil Wright's documentary, "The Song of Ceylon."
Recording is in progress at the G.P.O. studio at Blackheath.



Further stills from
Basil Wright's documentary
of Ceylon.

with violence. Their voices gradually rise in chorus and the chorus beats out a rhythm which is the rhythm of the train. The train whistles, and the scene fades out to an actual scene of violence, the whistle of the train continuing as a woman's scream. *Pett and Pott* is an excellent example of popular comedy heightened by an intelligent use of the potentialities of cinema technique. In a more serious context two new documentary films, *6.30 Collection* (E. Anstey and R. H. Watt) and *Weather Forecast* (Evelyn Spice), show a discreet use of sound symbolism—the diminishing sound of an aeroplane to suggest height, sounds of various modes of transport as a background to the final sorting of letters, various storm sounds “off” when all that is visible is the heaving sea, or the storm signal. The most advanced use of a continuous but disconnected sound strip is found in *Granton Trawler*—a simple documentary film shot with a hand-camera by Grierson and adapted for the screen with the aid of Cavalcanti. The “orchestral” means are extremely primitive—a mouth organ, a drum, the conversation of some Scots fishermen, but all combined in a symphonic effect. The *subject* of the conversation, for example, is of no importance—actually it is football; it is the impressionistic character of the vocal sounds that combine with other sounds to produce an asynchronous reinforcement of the visual effect.

Such experiments mark only the infancy of a new development in film technique. I think the analogy with counterpoint in music is fairly justifiable, and just as counterpoint in music led to a completely new development of the art, so this new counterpoint of sight and sound may lead to a completely new kind of film. But the difficulties ahead are enormous. For one thing, the device must go beyond mere impressionism, to some synthesis of a more abstract or formal nature. But before such an art can be possible, we have to develop a new type of artist—an artist who combines visual and aural sensibility and can use them simultaneously in the service of that particular plastic imagination which is the mark of the true film creator.

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MANUAL OF LAW FOR THE CINEMA TRADE. By Gordon Alchin (London Pitman, 30s.). A comprehensive work which will enable anyone to obtain information on any matter of a legal nature connected with the production or exhibition of films. The sections dealing with statutory and local regulations governing performances are of special value to everyone engaged in non-theatrical exhibition. For producers the chapters on the subject matter of films and sound records have a particular interest in view of the many copyright questions involved in production.

THE 1934-35 MOTION PICTURE ALMANAC. (New York, Quigley Publishing Co. 20s.). Over 1,000 pages of reference dealing with every aspect of commercial film production in America. There is a comprehensive who's who covering actors, technicians and executives, details of the year's film output, and full particulars of every organization connected with the American industry. There is also printed the full text of the famous Production Code of Ethics.

THE FUNCTION OF THE CAMERA-MAN

CURT COURANT

Interviewed by Ernest Dyer

"IN THE first place," said Courant, "the word 'cameraman' is unfortunate. The suggestion it conveys is too limited, too technical. 'Chief artistic collaborator,' were the phrase not so clumsy, would be less misleading. The cameraman collaborates with the director and the scenic designer and others so as to produce an artistic picture. At the same time he is the captain of a team of specialists. On this film, for example"—we had just come off the sets of *The Iron Duke*—"I am 'chief cameraman.' I have as assistants two 'first cameramen' and four 'assistant cameramen'—one first and one 'second' assistant to each camera. (We shoot everything through at least two cameras). Then there are all the studio electricians.

"You ask me how far the cameraman is creative. Well, what does good camera-work imply? Is it just to secure a clear, clean, rich picture—a 'good photo' in the Kodak sense of the word? This is only the basis. No, good camerawork is to give to each scene the atmosphere which the scenario of the particular film calls for. Each room, each set, each exterior has to reflect the mood which is suggested by a reading of the scene. If the mood of the scene is sad, then the camerawork must be in harmony and must invest the scene with just the right *ambience*. I read the scenario like an actor and then try to interpret it in terms of atmosphere. Sometimes perhaps the result may not be 'good' photography in the Kodak sense, but that does not matter if it is the right camerawork artistically for that scene."

E. D.: "So we cannot evaluate any shot fairly apart from its sequence. That seems to me well illustrated by your own work in *Ces Messieurs de la Santé* where the lighting seems to change with the period, from the murky gas gloom of the little shop to the electric radiance of the modern store."

C. C.: "In those early scenes I wanted to make you *feel* the dust. You do not want the screen always bright. Think of the paintings of Menzel and Rembrandt, so dark that you have to go right up to them, yet perfect in mood. We cameramen are after the same things as the old painters. Instead of pigments and brushes we

use lamps. We paint with light. Instead of colours we have a scale in monochrome. But what our cameras record is what our imaginations create when we paint our sets with light."

E. D.: "To what extent do you control the sets themselves?"

C. C.: "That is a matter of collaboration with the designer and director before shooting begins. We discuss the sketches and models."

E. D.: "But that scene you have just been shooting, with that broken gun-wheel you arranged so carefully upon the mound, does your script give you the details of that?"

C. C.: "Oh, no. Such a scene can be arranged upon the floor. Then I paint my sky-cloth with light to help the composition. That big ball-room set you saw us shooting the other day—every column of it has its roundness touched off by some specially placed light, so that the scene had form and depth and pictorial balance as well as the softness appropriate to candle-illumination. The lighting made it a composition."

E. D.: "What of the risk that shots with intrinsic pictorial appeal may distract from the thematic content of the film? Robert Edmund Jones says that he is most content with his stage settings when they fit a performance so perfectly that the audience does not notice them. Does not that apply to camerawork?"

C. C.: "The photography should enforce, not distract from, the thematic content. Selfish photography is like over-acting. The beauty of camerawork must be absolutely lap-dissolved with the mood of the story. It is like some vital part in the mechanism of a watch. The audience—members of the average audience—should never be aware of the camera.

"For instance, the camera's angle of vision is more limited than that of the human eye, so that if we wish to convey the impression of the unhampered movements and gestures of George Arliss we have to follow him with pan and track and keep him always 'trained' by a moving focus. We must not allow him to be the prisoner of the frame. But the audience is not aware of that constant camera movement. When the audience feels that anything is technical then it is bad. So with angles. The right angle is the natural angle. When a technical trick is so good that the audience does not see that a trick is being used then it is artistic camerawork.

"Look at that set in there. A sound-stage lumped with 100 tons of dirt and turned into the battlefield of Waterloo. 30 electricians and 7,000 amps to light it. An artificial sky within a few dozen feet of the foreground. Yet the camera will give you a perfect illusion of miles of depth. Shafts of sunlight touching the stone walls and the branches of the tree. Every blade of grass almost with its separate lighting. The impression of an exterior rendered in the studio by artificial light!"

E. D.: "But why shoot it in a studio? Why not go outside to begin with?"

C. C.: "Good! Consider the scene. It is the afternoon of battle, between day and evening. There is a feeling of hopelessness on the part of the French. Ney makes his pathetic last stand. It calls for an atmosphere that is mellow and *triste*. What odds on finding that lighting when you wanted it in Nature! What hopes of *keeping* it fixed, if need be, for two days! Besides, there is the action to be lit, too. That may want lighting differently from the set. Different players need different lighting. I do not light Arliss as I light Veidt. We experimented and found the quality of character lighting which would give Arliss the rugged Wellington mask."

E. D.: "So that you would light Arliss differently in two different films?"

C. C.: "Quite. A young girl on the other hand would need soft lighting."

E. D.: "To what extent can you modify the script once you are working upon it?"

C. C.: "The cameraman could always put a proposition to the director. Saville, though, works very close to script."

E. D.: "To what extent are you limited on the floor?"

C. C.: "Only by time. I have to have my lamps ready by the time the director is ready. Often perhaps I could go on trying still better lighting. But you cannot hold up a studio where hundreds of salaried players may be waiting."

E. D.: "To what extent can you control the processing or indulge in the tricks of delayed development and so on, beloved by the amateur photographer?"

C. C.: "Developing is mechanical, automatic, entirely uniform. The whole of a day's work, perhaps twenty set-ups—will be developed together in one strip. And the sound-track must have absolutely even development. (That is only one of the limitations imposed by sound).

"It means that the cameraman in the studio is responsible for the balance of light and shade in the film shown on the screen. Day after day, through some 1,500 different set-ups, each with its slightly individual quality of lighting, he has to maintain a general level of light. All the time he has to have in mind the finished product on the screen.

"You ask how he is a creative artist. Consider. A camera is a machine, a vehicle for the film; the lens is a piece of dead glass; a lamp is a lamp; the film itself is a chemical product; the projector is another machine, another vehicle. The man who can visualize a scene in terms of these dead things and from them create a work of living beauty, he is a creative artist. That is my 'cry.' "



From "Atalante," a French film of barge life,
by the late Jean Vigo.





From "Weather Forecast,"
a G.P.O. film.

Production: John Grierson.
Direction: Evelyn Spice.

WAGNER AND FILM

DALLAS BOWER

HUGH MACDIARMID's article in the Spring issue of *Cinema Quarterly* gives me a cue. A cue moreover, awaited with growing impatience, for, with my belief never disturbed, I have been waiting a long while in the wings. One memorable evening in Bloomsbury (such a fitting environment!) I outlined to Miss C. A. Lejeune my ideas upon the obvious association of Wagnerian music-drama theory and sound-film. Those of my friends, or persons whom I choose so to call, who may read this know that the subject is my favourite pastime; and many in varying degrees of production eminence have suffered. Or so I feel. For never do I appear to have convinced anybody worth convincing. Even the distinguished critic of "The Observer" merely said "Yes" to everything I said. Here, I thought was a candidate fitted for inefficient continuity keeping, not the Omniscient Critic of my imagination. But, in retrospect, I thought how wrong I had been in my estimate, for quite obviously the lady knew nothing about Wagner. Nor do the majority of film theorists—not even a little bit. Which gives my case an added significance, I feel; for if they did, they would see how simple it is.

Now, MacDiarmid, as a poet, will have pity on me maybe; at least, he will listen. And MacDiarmid, dropping as he does on bended knee as T. S. Eliot passes, will probably think Wagner just too too much; but I would have him bear with me for a short while. The quintessence of his article is a plea for the poetic film. That if a film has aesthetic sensibility it cannot therefore be a "proposition for showmen" is slowly losing weight with the better film-trade critics, because the box-office is beginning to show to the contrary. Let us then, accept the commercial desirability of the *poetic* film, using the term *poetic* in MacDiarmid's sense. Accepting also, the rather obvious premise that the poetry, the music and the film must be specially composed, synthesized as a co-operative whole, may we not ask if such a film potentially does not exist? Inevitably, said Wagner, the poet's art, in its sublimest moments, becomes music. And he chose to write his epic poems (forget how bad they may be as pure poetry) in a medium which asked for visual representation, physically free. That he needed visual representation he could not substantiate; essentially and primarily a man of the theatre, wish-

fulfilment played its part. But he knew the physiological value in relation to aesthetical appreciation of aural and visual synchronization. Possibly that was his excuse for the stage, because he knew the stage was inadequate for a scientifically genuine synthesis. It lacked physical freedom; and he was only on the edge of understanding the difference *during his lifetime* between spatial and temporal art-forms. In short, he needed cinema. Had the vast technical resources of the modern cinema *deus ex machina* been available to him, one wonders how different in practical construction his music-dramas would be. His theory is a long way from his practice. He knew his ideal was unattainable, and he knew also just how far he could go in his stage directions without destroying the respect of his stage machinist. For instance "Rhinegold" Scene I runs:—

"At the bottom of the Rhine. Greenish twilight, lighter above, darker below. The upper part of the scene is filled with moving water which restlessly streams from R. to L. Towards the ground the waters resolve themselves into a fine mist, so that the space to a man's height from the stage seems free from water, which flows like a train of clouds over the gloomy depths. Everywhere are steep points of rock jutting up from the depths and enclosing the whole stage. All the ground is broken into a wild confusion of jagged pieces, so that there is no level place, while on all sides darkness indicates other deeper fissures. Round the rock in the centre of the stage, whence its peak rises higher into lighter water, one of the RHINE-NYMPHS is seen merrily swimming."

We most of us know what a Covent Garden (or even a Bayreuth) Rhine-nymph looks like. It can be done—up to a point. And largely, the same might apply to film. We are at once confronted with the human consideration. O, those fat Isolde! And a Tristan nearer fifty than thirty. We have our physical freedom, we can by scenario construction and a certain technique in shooting achieve real movement in contradistinction to film movement—in fact, the poetic film in the Wagnerian sense tends to sweep Kuschelov into the dustbin—but we are still faced with the purely physiological problem. It is only the magic of the music that permits us at all to believe in an elderly Siegfried. From the hideous discomfort of the gallery or the delicious debauchery of a thirty-five shilling stall, we cannot see the facial contortions that are actually taking place on the stage. Even with Messrs. Negretti and Zambra's most powerful assistance, that strange desire to see the singer nearer cannot by any conceivable means be satisfied to the extent it could be in a close-up on the screen. And a head and shoulder close-up of Siegfried singing would be revolting. The makers of "musicals" soon found out that one cannot play a person singing nearer than three-quarters figure height in medium shot. As a special treat

we occasionally get a big head of Jeanette MacDonald singing in bed; but only for a little while. Just a short shot so that we know the miserable editor has been given something to which he can cut. No: in our new Wagnerian theatre we cannot tolerate the idea of *seeing* the singers sing but we might be prepared to consider *hearing* a different voice to that of the person seen on the screen. There would, of course, be no question of lip synchronization either. We would use two casts: visual and aural. I was once audacious enough, after a preliminary discussion, to ask Elisabeth Bergner if she would like to play a visual Isolde. She said it would probably be very amusing for children. I suppose I could not have made myself less understood. For Bergner, whose discourse on and knowledge of Wagnerian histrionics is as brilliant as her appreciation of Pudovkin is stimulating, knew very well I was serious. But Paul Czinner (who is a Wagnerian student) has really concluded any argument as to the final shape a Wagnerian adaptation should take. One could possibly use part of the vocal line; but in the main, one would use the *Sprech-melodie* of the line and it would be spoken from the screen. Thus, we have largely solved the physiological problem.

As to the fitness of a Wagnerian adaptation, that of course, is another question. I suspect MacDiarmid might say no. We know "The Ring" is unwieldy and the material out-of-hand; we treat its devices, its *leit-motiv* and visual symbolism as elementary now, but the old magic still remains. The human universals are in its spirit; and to depreciate it or Wagner, like Sacheverell Sitwell, is coming near to depreciating "Lear." And no matter what our enthusiasm for cinema, we know that no film ever made has one tenth of the intrinsic value of "Lear." The affinity between Shakespeare and Wagner it would be redundant for me to discuss; of both it can be said for certain they occupy seats in immortality very close; of Shakespeare that he was the greater artist even if only because he was so much less a charlatan. Where the poetic film is concerned, the choice of existing material is relatively unimportant; it matters little if it be "Tristan" or "The Tempest" (with the magnificent Sibelius score), an attempt at "The Divine Comedy" or "Le Mort d'Arthur." But let us remember that Shakespeare, who would have delighted in cycloramas and revolving stages (O, heresy!) and Wagner, who would have relished them, were both, greatest of poets and greatest of composers respectively, great scenarists. They burst the walls of their theatre on every hand. Can we not work as interpretive artists in putting some of their work into the medium which fits it best? Should we not be doing better work cinematically in the first instance than doing new work? For maybe, in the words of a Hollywood supervising production executive, "There don't seem to be no Shakespeare around this joint, boys!"

FILMS IN PARIS

ALEXANDER WERTH

THE death of the *avant garde* movement is an old story, but its tragedy still clings to all consideration of French cinema. Nowhere is the victory of cheap commercialism so resented and the outlook of directors so hopeless. The French *avant gardists* were innocents. They built a school of cinema, and the films of Cavalcanti, Clair, Epstein and Jean Renoir created a specialized but powerful audience. Both the distributors who handled them and the little theatres which showed them prospered. Unfortunately, the distributors and the exhibitors made money and they used it to go utterly commercial. The directors were abandoned. The specialized audience was abandoned for the boys and girls of the boulevards. That specialized audience has disappeared. Complacent theatre directors tell you so.

The best film of the moment is Jean Vigo's *Atalante*, partly financed, they say, by Vigo himself. A great mistake the Film Society not taking last season *Zéro de Conduite*, his satire of school life, and one they must make up for this year. Vigo is young, and at 26 his style has not yet matured, but he is strangely fanciful—with little outbursts of surrealist imagery that mark him a poet.

Fritz Lang's latest film *Liliom* is out. It appears under Pommer's production but, as Pommer was ill most of the time, the film is very much Lang's. This is a fairly ordinary account of the tale in which Liliom, the tough of the sideshows, lives and loves and fights his way to an early death, ascends into heaven, and is given his day on earth after sixteen years in purgatory to make amends. The heaven scenes are in the manner of *Metropolis*. Angels sit amphitheatre fashion on clouds with stars twinkling about, and judgment is a star-dusted version of the police court Liliom abandoned below. This Sunday school dream is presented literally, without poetry or satire or fun. But the film is well made and, as to trick work, excellent. Lang got his Hollywood contract on this.

By coincidence *Marie* by Fejos, with Annabella, has just come in from Hungary, with the self-same theme. Marie, the little girl with the illegitimate baby, is hunted and harried from door to door, till, when the baby is taken away from her, she too dies and ascends into a star-dusted heaven. There is word of *Marie* going to the London Academy, though the English censorship ordinarily bans all

reference to heaven. Halcyon horizons must be strictly de Mille.

From the French studios themselves, there is only *Le Grand Jeu* to take account of: a *Beau Geste* affair by Feyder out of Algeria and the legionnaires. It is an efficient performance with fine acting by Feyder's wife, Francoise Rosay, and proves that the French cinema can occasionally make a film as well as Hollywood. But this tragedy of a young man who, abandoned by a mercenary mistress, finds a better hearted double in the Sahara, is hardly important. Feyder has lost the command of atmosphere which made *Atlantide* great ten years ago.

What a fine film in comparison to all these is *La Chienne*, a three-year old Renoir which is still running, and what a pity it is the censor in England has banned it. It is sentimental in part, with its story of a bank clerk who falls in love with a prostitute and finally murders her, but in the total effect of its descriptive realism and finely built action, it is a great film—the greatest Renoir has done. The murder scene is near to Dostoevsky.

Renoir is not working. Feyder is not working. Jean Lods has had to find asylum in Russia. Jean Vigo is too ill to work. Epstein and Clair are tossing fanfares in the commercial circuit. Cavalcanti in England seems to have found freedom to experiment and carry on the tradition of the old days. He gave a private show of *Pett and Pott* recently, at the F.I.F. theatre on the Champs Elysées. The audience rose to its many innovations of sound, and it was a great personal triumph for him.

AMERICA

At the present time, when within the movie industry it is practically impossible to produce a vital picture, mystery stories offer promising material to the creative director. Innocuous stuff for the most part, mysteries seldom provoke the antagonism of censors, sensitive patriots, religious, moral and political traditionalists, and other powerful groups. Their plots are exciting, clear cut, and visual rather than intellectual. And because they generally make money, the producer is inclined to allow the director more than usual freedom. Thus it is that two of the best directed Hollywood films of the last quarter are mysteries, *Fog Over Frisco*, directed by William Dieterle, and *The Thin Man*, directed by W. S. Van Dyke.

R.K.O., having experimented in Technicolor for some time, has recently produced a colour short, *Cucharacha* (cockroach), named after the popular Mexican song which is worked into the story. The plot is stereotyped and inconsequential. The direction is pro-

saic. What is significant to the producer as well as the critic, is the colour, which has been supervised by Edmund Jones, the Broadway stage designer.

Reactions to the colour after seeing one screening: (1) Enjoyed observing for the first time chromatic detail in non-animated film worked out by an artist. Shades, blending, contrasts of colours built up into a composition, in contrast to the usual colour post-card effect. (2) Bewildered by having to watch colour, direction, movement, and story all at once. Almost like trying to see everything at a three ring circus. (3) Noticed a theatricalness in the design of the coloured set. Seemed that the set was not designed for camera angles, close-ups, and dolley shots. (4) Felt that colour does the following: gives the material a stereoscopic roundness and unusual depth; emphasizes what may not be desired, such as a bright orange tie in a close-up; spoils the possibilities of two-dimensional design present in black-and-white film. (5) Amused at the unimaginative and incomplete attempt to use colour as an intrinsic part of the plot: a face darkens from embarrassment in rather halo fashion with the aid of a spot light (Disney's Big Bad Wolf changed colour more convincingly), and yet a few minutes later the same face, in agony from the effect of an over seasoned salad, doesn't change in colour; a scene of anger is played before a wall bathed in passionate red-orange light, while two steps to the right the wall is a green grey. (6) Concluded that colour paradoxically renders natural material artificial, and that therefore it would be most successful in fantasy and musicals and stylized productions.

According to inside authority, M.G.M. has spent about 300,000 dollars on *David Copperfield* (not yet in production) merely testing actors for the various parts. So far no one has been selected for David. It cost about 30,000 dollars to produce *Madchen in Uniform*.

"Time," the news magazine, is launching a new type of news-reel. As reported in the "Motion Picture Herald," the experimenters in charge have been working "on the theory that in the proper picturization of each news sequence there should be depicted: (1) the events leading up to the beginning; (2) the events that transpired between the beginning and the end, and (3) the end itself, all three parts to be built up dramatically at both the studio and on the actual scene of the incident." Thus stock shots and studio scenes will augment the actual news-reel event.

The idea sounds promising. But "Time" will not have to go far to surpass the Hollywood news-reel, what with its disregard of important events, and monotonous repetition of beauty parades and military manœuvres.

MACK W. SCHWAB.

GERMANY

THOUGH regimented under Nazi control the Ufa studios are not to be used for constructive propaganda in the manner of the Soviets, but are to produce pleasant narcotics intended, no doubt, to ease the pain of other measures of reform. The new theatrical programme, which sets out to "give the public what they want—namely a means of forgetting care and finding amusement," is headed by *Baron Neuhaus*, a musical comedy of the time of Maria Theresa, directed by Gustav Ucicky, who will also make *Barcarole*, with Offenbach's music. Dr. Arthur Robison, of *Warning Shadows* fame, is to make *The Secret of Woronzeff*, a society film of the Riviera and Paris, featuring Brigitte Helm.

From a scenario by Thea von Harbou, Gerhard Lamprecht is to direct *Turandot, Princess of China*, a lavish Oriental spectacle designed by Herlth and Rohrig, remembered for their work on *Faust* and *Tartuffe*; Wagner will photograph. A Strauss operetta, *The Gipsy Baron*, will be made by Karl Hartl. *Holidays from Myself* is a comedy of life in a Silesian sanatorium where every patient has to lay aside his "everyday I," adapted from a romance by the poet Paul Keller by Olaf Ejord.

But however far Ufa may have departed from its traditions in dramatic production, the new programme of the educational department promises a continuance of Neubabelsberg's interest in scientific achievement and fine workmanship. *In the Tracks of the Hansiatic League* is a survey of the Gothic architecture of the Hansiatic builders and a description of the League's influence on German civilization. Dr. Ulrich K. T. Schulz is directing a new series of films dealing with the life of meadow and forest. Two biological films, *Voices in the Reeds* and *Fowl for the Hunter*, show with the use of telephoto lenses the habits of timid wild game, and new secrets of the plant world are revealed in *The Speech of Plants* and *Orchids*. *Six-legged Builders* is announced (with evident pride) as showing the "state-like arrangements and organization of different kinds of German ants."

Dr. Martin Rikli has directed a number of films such as *The Infinite Cosmos*, dealing with astronomy, and *Whirlpools in Water*. These will be followed by *Motor Highways*; *Gorch Fock*, illustrating the training of naval cadets; and *F.P.I. Becomes a Reality*, a German Air-hansa film. Wilhelm Prager will make a number of films of German landscape and German life. Various language versions are being made of all these films.

NEW ABSTRACT PROCESS

Night on the Bare Mountain is the result of a year's experiment to achieve a new method of production related in some ways to the animated cartoon, though the relationship is one rather of contradiction than of similarity.

In cartoon production, one drawing is traced on the drawing which preceded it, and it is relatively easy to move the lines or surfaces with the necessary precision. The serious drawback lies in the impossibility of reproducing with precision in a series of drawings the grey tones or shadings in movement. In other words, the animated cartoon corresponds to a line drawing. And this drawing is rather summary because of the large number of pictures to be made.

Now Alexeieff has arrived at a means of creating a film, made by hand, but analogous to an engraving, containing all the finesses of tone and shading. The idea of filming a single picture, artificial and mobile, has existed for several years. Starting on this principle of a single picture being capable of indefinite modification, we have realized a process absolutely supple from all points of view and allowing the artist to put in film form everything the imagination can conceive.

At first it would seem easy to make a picture with charcoal, in oils, or with the aerograph, and to retouch it after taking each picture with a camera turned frame by frame; but none of the materials existing in painting, engraving or drawing would permit of retouches so numerous and so delicate as the film demands.

The invention of a material both sensitive and resistant, offering all the shades of grey, was the problem. This material we eventually found, and it is the basis of the process in question.

The picture is made on a screen of considerable dimensions, with the aid of this material which allows of all possible effects and surpasses in brilliancy and delicacy of tint everything that is known in engraving. The picture is then modified as the successive stages are photographed.

The scenario of *Night on the Bare Mountain* was based on the music of Mussorgsky recorded on a gramophone record. With the aid of a stop watch, the music was analysed and timed phrase by phrase to a fifth of a second. A study of the orchestra score enabled us to perfect this exactitude to a twenty-fourth of a second. Thus the pictorial and musical compositions are intimately bound together and the visual image derives its form and evolution from that of the music.

CLAIRE PARKER, A. ALEXEIEFF.



From René Clair's new film, "Le Dernier Milliardaire," to be included in the present Academy season. Raymond Cordy, Max Dearly and Marcel Carpentier are in the cast.





Raimu in "Ces Messieurs de la Santé," a satirical French comedy directed by Pierre Colombier.

(Courtesy of Academy, London).



Conrad Veidt and Paul Graetz in "Jew Süss" (Gaumont-British), directed by Lothar Mendes. Photography: Bernard Knowles.

BRUCE WOOLFE, ROTHAS, AND "RISING TIDE"

THIS is Paul Rotha's second documentary under Bruce Woolfe, and Gaumont-British have publicly announced that it marks their entry into the field of documentary. Fine. Like *Contact*, *Rising Tide* is a three reeler—a size which, in documentary, requires both ambition of idea and solidity of design. One can wander discursively or descriptively over one reel, or a reel and a half. Thereafter it is the theme that counts. Rotha knows this. *Contact* has the theme that air transport brings the nations closer together. *Rising Tide* has the theme that great construction plans (in this case the building of a Southampton Dock) are intimately related to the economic life of the country.

This is a fine theme, but of course a dangerous one, because it goes to the heart of economics. It means that if the film is to be dramatically or humanly true, the development of the theme must be economically true. And the whole idea is too near to our common concern to allow of rhetorical or other superficial solution. Here, if anywhere, cinema has to be right, as well as good looking, to justify itself.

The film describes lines of unemployed, and very dramatically, to introduce the problem. It sets about the building of the dock, and describes it in really terrific photography. It opens the sluices, and fills the basin. It brings in the ship. But what then? Magically, and without explanation, somehow, just somehow, by no more than a temporal juxtaposition of sequence, the world is set to work again. The cotton factories whirl—and very magnificently—the steel workers in rhythmic splendour fill their furnaces. Much photography indeed, but no economics. By what extra efficiency in Southampton, of all places, Lancashire commands new markets, by what process of rationalization the dole line decreases, is not explained. "Life follows art," said Oscar Wilde. Yes, but it only does so if it is true art going to the heart of things and revealing their growing point. *Rising Tide* will not pass muster, and Rotha knows it won't. But see his relation to the business. Some of the material he fell heir to, and the idea was given him already half digested. He was, in other words, not his own master in the formulation of the problem, and all he could really bring to it was his eye for pic-

tures, and his power of tempoed sequence. These virtues may demonstrate a great talent. They do not make a film. It is the old story of the wood and the trees. In *Rising Tide* Rotha is a master of foliage.

The whole business so demonstrates the essential problem of production, and so reveals the mistaken relationship which may exist between producer and director that a friendly critic may be permitted to analyse the case still further. If this producer-director relationship is to be fruitful, there is one matter on which the two partners must be agreed—and that is on the theme. On the details of photography, cutting and sound, they may fight as much as they please, for they do not finally matter. The theme does. It must be agreed together, believed in together, slaved at in common, from the inception of the film until its completion.

It is not for the producer to dictate a theme in which the director cannot follow him. That way lies every disaster of production. The directors 'best' deteriorates inevitably into a demonstration of virtuosity. What was meant to be important, for the lack of conviction that goes with it, comes to pretence and disappointment. The director indeed (though he probably needs the money) lends his reputation to an impossible task.

Nor is it for the director to dictate the theme to the producer. The producer has his own responsibilities: it may be to finance, or to doctrine, or to art itself. But though his intentions for a film are thus defined, it is to his interest that the director, as the interpreter of his hopes, should see eye to eye with him. That way he uses another talent and inspiration to complement his own.

The solution is really a simple one. Find the theme on which there is absolute unqualified agreement and shoot to it. It may not be the biggest or the deepest possible theme, it may not be what each separately considers the best theme, but let it be a theme commonly agreed: one indeed in which they can join their energies. Bruce Woolfe and Rotha might consider this. Rotha has a talent well worth exploiting and there is much they might develop together. They cannot afford to be out of step, as would seem to be the case in *Rising Tide*.

The remainder of the criticism is more personal to Rotha. He is still a silent director. His eye seems to be still exclusively glued to visual design and the pleasing passage of images across the screen. He adds sound but he does not seem yet to think sound. This is wrong of him, for sound, with its many human perspectives, has more to give him than almost any other documentary director. It will warm his sequence and intensify his reference. It will save him from the self-consciousness of his photographic style. Atmospheric music and rhythmic beat are not enough. Sound too must be narrative.

JOHN GRIERSON.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

DEVELOPING SOUND

FORSYTH HARDY

A NEW consciousness of sound as a means of enriching the expressiveness of the film is the most interesting development of a quarter singularly unproductive of notable pictures. Ever since Jolson broke the sacred silence, of course, there has been a realization, in theory, that sound ought to have more than a merely naturalistic purpose in cinema; and a few experimentalists have made fleeting attempts to do unconventional things with the sound-strip. There is no need to detail again the experiments of Clair, Hitchcock, Lubitsch and the others. Their isolated outbursts of imaginative experimentation with sound have already been analysed with so much reverence that they are almost elevated into a doctrine, instead of being accepted as haphazard gropings towards the light. The limit in the expressive use of sound was not reached with Clair's cine-opera or the soliloquy before the shaving mirror in *Murder*. These and such other celebrated experiments as the choral accompaniment to the unemployment sequence in *Three Cornered Moon* and the police-car call prologue to *Beast of the City* ought to have been regarded as minor discoveries in an unknown land. But instead of being the starting points for further exploration, they have been too often estimated as final achievements—devices to be copied perhaps, but not ideas to be understood and developed. Thus there has been no general march forward: the pioneers have faltered and for the most part fallen back. The result is that we are not now much nearer to a fully expressive use of sound than we were in the days of *The Great Gabbo*. We have made sound more distinct, but not more dramatic.

There has been some evidence this quarter however, of a change in attitude. Grierson and Cavalcanti at the G.P.O. have been making a series of experiments in the art and practice of sound—which are in advance of anything yet attempted and which have a real significance for the development of film. The tentative departures from convention in *6.30 Collection* and *Cable Ship*, which Grierson has already described in these pages, have been followed by more exciting developments in *Granton Trawler* and *Weather Forecast*, while *Pett and Pott* represents a complete departure from the traditional form of the talking picture and the emergence of a sound film with an aural expressiveness related to, but not merely dependant on, the

visuals. Grierson himself describes this and his other new sound-films as the first sods cut in a new country. He wishes them to be assessed only as beginnings. Yet *Pett and Pott* in its three reels contains more effective achievement in the expressive use of sound than there was in the collected work of all the previous experimentalists. Grierson and Cavalcanti have not shut their eyes to previous developments and there is for example, a comic sequence in a suburb-bound tube with a five-part chorus as commentary which is reminiscent of the methods of Clair; but we do not have a mere disguised excerpt from *Le Million* but an idea greatly elaborated and playing its inter-related part with other new ideas in the sequence. This as with the other experiments of the film, is not a haphazard interlopation but part of a co-ordinated sound accompaniment that runs on, now providing a background comment for the scene, now coming forward to dominate the visuals, and always making the film more expressive than it would have been with natural sound. I shall not attempt here to work out the significance of all that Grierson and Cavalcanti achieve in *Pett and Pott*; that is best left to the producers themselves. But it is important to record that a sizeable pebble has been dropped into the pool of complacency over the problems of sound and that the ripples will inevitably spread far and wide.

Walt Disney has for long been accepted as one of the major figures of the sound cinema. Rotha, writing in "The Film Till Now," considered that "the essential characteristics of the Disney cartoon films, where distorted linear images are matched with equally distorted sound images, are those of the visual sound-film of the future." For a time certainly, it seemed that Disney was working out the principles of a sound-film which, eschewing naturalism, would use sound images in counterpoint to increase the expressiveness of the film and supply through the sound-strip a comic commentary for the movement of the cartoon. But this line of development has not been followed out in his cartoons; many of the early experiments with distorted sound were given up and Disney was apparently satisfied to concentrate on draughtsmanship. Possibly the immense popularity of his work made experiment more difficult. Colour has for the past year been absorbing his attention—for which development we are deeply grateful—and the quarter's colour Silly Symphonies, *The Wise Old Hen*, *The Flying Mouse* and *Peculiar Penguins*, are as fine as anything he has done. But the most exciting cartoon of the quarter is undoubtedly *Orphan's Benefit* which seems to indicate that Disney has begun to think again in terms of sound. The comic high-lights of the cartoon do not occur in its draughtsmanship; they are pure sound jokes. A burly Buff Orpington who appears as an opera star at Mickey's concert, has not a prosaic



From "Night on The Bare Mountain" produced by a new method, giving the impression of an animated engraving, invented by Alexeieff. To be shown shortly by the Film Society, London.



Copy 20
#44 3531



Nova Pilbeam in "Little Friend" (Gaumont-British), directed by Berthold Viertel. Photography: Gunthur Krampf.

human voice but clucks, cackles and screeches in deliciously distorted imitation of a palpitating prima donna. The unexpectedness of the sounds produces an instantaneous response in laughter. Sound is used with a similar comic effectiveness in the attempts of a duck to recite "Little Boy Blue." The fact that Disney is a comic artist does not necessarily mean that his work is without significance; and an analysis of his comic uses of sound does not preclude us from honest enjoyment of the fun.

Experiment with sound has not yet spread generally to the commercial cinema, though it is not too much to suggest that *Pett and Pott* will in time initiate a new approach altogether to the studio film. Meanwhile there has been a sudden outburst of song in the cinema. The crooner has been ousted by the opera star and the air is filled with Wagnerian melodies. Snippets of opera in sentimental stories, of course, must not be mistaken for the real thing and it would be wrong to deduce from the popularity of *Blossom Time* and *One Night of Love* that the British are a nation of opera lovers. Yet the new vogue for musical films has not come without considerable public demand and we may assume that this demonstrated desire for something more than jazz and crooning does indicate an advance in musical appreciation. For the most part the new operatic films conform to a conventional pattern and there is little attempt to use music and song dramatically from a filmic point of view. Exceptions are a scene towards the close of *Evensong*: Irela is resentfully realizing that her career as a singer is over while the voice of the new favourite runs on throughout the scene in a sort of commentative chorus of exultation; and another in *One Night of Love* when the young American student sings from the window of a Milanese garret and gradually all of the musicians in the studios within earshot adapt their playing to her song. But generally the new musical films are content to use the microphone conventionally to record straightforwardly the voice of the chosen operatic star. In addition, we have had Jan Kiepura in *My Song for You* and Joseph Schmidt in *My Song Goes Round the World*.

Foreign films of the quarter have been comparatively few. The Curzon opened its season with *The Slump is Over*; the Academy with *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, which Rotha reviews elsewhere. An interesting list of forthcoming attractions includes the new Clair picture, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*, a Swedish comedy, *Pettersen and Bendel* and Jacques Feyder's *Pension Mimosa*. There are vague forecasts of new Russian films including *Three Songs of Lenin* by Dziga-Vertov and *The Great Consoler* by Kuleshov, and the Film Society promises strange importations from Turkey (*Aysel, Fille de Montagne*) and Poland (*Chalutzim*). If the promises are fulfilled, it ought to be an exciting Continental season.

JEW SÜSS

Production: Gaumont-British. Script: Rawlinson. Direction: Lothar Mendes. Photography: Bernard Knowles. Sets: Alfred Junge. Editing: Otto Ludwig. Length: 9,740 feet. Distribution: G.-B. Distributors. With Conrad Veidt, Frank Vosper, Benita Hume, Cedric Hardwicke, Paul Graetz, Gerald du Maurier.

NINE years ago Feuchtwanger ushered in a new era of historical fiction by writing what is to some minds the greatest historical novel of all time. *Jew Süss* the film might have ended an era of costume pictures by in turn being the biggest effort of its kind. Instead it continues the vogue for which Korda must be given the credit of starting. But because of what *Süss* might have meant for cinema in general and British films in particular, because of the wide-spread discussion it must provoke, and because in some ways it is a very ambitious endeavour, it deserves greater space than the other historical pictures of the year.

With his magnificent opening chapter, Feuchtwanger set the scale for his whole story of the Jew. We were conscious at once of the wide horizons of the eighteenth century, of the bustle and life and intrigue within these limits of Würtemberg. Everything that followed, the craft, the guile, the whoring, the praying, the intriguing, the private struggles and public issues fell into place on this vast canvas. Everything had significance within the boundaries of the epoch. Therein lay the greatness of the author's approach. It is precisely this vision, this magnitude of mind, that the film does not possess.

The book has been well pilfered. All the plums are here, all the bombastic moments, all the bloody minutes, all the natty spectacle and all the shining pomp. On the surface it spreads a grand array. Men talk of doing this and doing that, but never do we see them doing it. *Süss* declares his lust for power, becomes the Duke's prop, is the indispensable and hated Jew, but why and how he contrives these things is a mystery. Never are we taken beneath the gilded scene, never are the real issues behind *Süss's* behaviour or the economic motives underlying the political intrigue revealed. Here is no cross-section of the eighteenth century which might have been such grand material for movie. The film is founded on the superficial appearance of men and things, an approach that has never and can never achieve the level of greatness.

This is no destructive broadside. The film is too big for that, big enough to stand criticism. Big in money. So big that all the

furniture, the costumes, the jewels, the nick-nacks and baubles might well have been ticketed with their hire price. I remember some publicity about the countless dozen tulips for Süß's garden, real tulips. But, alas, they mean little on the screen. They are overdone. It is all overdone. Except taste, which is absent. There is nothing of the finer qualities of observation and selection, of the instinctive feeling for what is right and what is wrong. There is no modulation or balance. That is a director's job and that, I think, is where Mendes fails to qualify for the task. Why, I wonder, was Mendes chosen to make this film? His previous record shows *The Four Feathers*, *Love Makes Us Blind* and *Dangerous Curves*—all probably estimable pictures of their kind, but that kind was not Süß. Small wonder, then, at the opportunities missed. The climax, for example. Why ignore Feuchtwanger's special emphasis on the iron cage and its history, when it offered such dynamic reference to the hanging?

Veidt we have watched since Cesare in *Caligari*. A parade of Borgia, Nelson, Ivan, Baldwin, Orlac, Louis XI, Gwynplaine, Rasputin and Jew. They are all here. The demoniacal laugh, the furrowed brows, the straying locks of hair. He shares with Garbo a physique rich in photogenique meaning. But since he has lost touch with significant direction, he has given way more and more to mannerisms. Some call this great acting. It is powerful but I doubt if it is great. With the exception of Hardwicke, most of the others overact, with Vosper's Karl Alexander the worst offence. Scarcely any can wear their clothes save the dignified du Maurier, who alone of the company appears to know how to manage his sword when he sits down. But the part of Weissensee, important in the book, is so clipped that from the anxious expression on his face, Sir Gerald must have been bewildered at his own presence. The sets are lavish; but then Jünge can do this sort of thing standing on his head. Did he not design hunting-lodges for Franz Joseph?

What then is the result? I do not believe that anyone will ever make better if as good historical films than did the Germans in their heyday. *Federicus Rex*, *Dubarry* and *Manon Lescaut*. They gave everything (save fantasy) that cinema has to give in their attempt to bring alive the past. And they achieved nothing better than museum value. When shall we realize that the camera belongs to the present, that its concern is actuality not artificiality? The news-reel of the Marseilles assassination shown in this same programme proves this better than my theory. Its chance rendering of a living (and dying) moment transfixed the audience. What chance had the mere hundred thousand odd pounds of Süß against reality?

PAUL ROTH.

NELL GWYN

Production: British and Dominions. Direction: Herbert Wilcox. Photography: Fred Young. Art Direction: L. P. Williams. Distribution: United Artists. With Anna Neagle, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Esmé Percy. Length: 7,719 feet.

DESPITE its origins which, rightly or wrongly, we have hitherto regarded with suspicion, this is one of the more sizeable films of the quarter. The co-operation between the production staff which gave a special interest to *The Queen's Affair* is here more prominently in evidence. Wilcox, by some strange genius, seems to have made a harmonious team out of his production staff and the result is a well-knit job which makes no concessions to either kind of brow and is a good honest film.

The story, though by choice revealing only a small facet of history, neither perverts nor unduly "musicalizes" the facts of history. Hardwicke gives an exceptionally fine performance, investing the part of Charles II with all the vacillations and strange twists of character which were a part of that monarch, yet retaining a certain dignity which the film commendably lives up to. Anna Neagle, despite a certain harrying of the part of Nell, never achieves anything notable. She lacks the divine fire and we are only too conscious of a hard-working actress doing her best. But even although her performance is only adequate, the film does not suffer unduly as Wilcox has shrewdly arranged that it does not depend merely on stars for success. That is an unusual achievement for a factory-made film.

In the titles, credit is given to Charles II, Nell Gwyn and Samuel Pepys for the dialogue; and Miles Malleon has selected, arranged and augmented this admirably, so that while it is on occasion colloquial, it is never cheap. It is the finest we have had in any historical film in this country. We can forgive Wilcox everything in his film past for this production which marks, for this country, an entirely new standard of co-operation between the technicians.

D. F. TAYLOR.

ATALANTE

Direction: Jean Vigo. Production: Gaumont-France.

Barge stories are bad luck in cinema, or so they say. There is association of slow tempo and dirty water, and drab pedestrian happenings on water fronts. A bargee, like any other slum dweller, lives in confined surroundings without horizon of storm or distance. Vigo's film is beautiful because it makes its story out of these very elements. A peasant girl marries a barge skipper; the barge sets off on a long tramp to Paris. The girl is excited at the notion of Paris and makes dreams of it; the skipper, like a good bargee,



From "Nell Gwyn," a British and Dominions film directed by Herbert Wilcox, with Anna Neagle and Cedric Hardwicke. Photography: Fred Young.



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knows better. They go ashore. The girl becomes still more excited. They quarrel and separate, and the barge goes on. Realism wins, and they come together again.

It is all very simple but true. The only possible criticism is that Vigo makes the coming together more sentimental than it need have been. The girl wanders overmuch on desolate bridges looking for the "Atalante," when any good proletarian would have had the sense to use the police. The issue would not have appeared any less desperate.

The chief thing about the film is the quality of Vigo as a director. He tells the right story; he tells it in a style peculiar to himself. It is an exciting style. At the base of it is a sense of documentary realism which makes the barge a real barge—so exact in its topography that one could find one's way on it blindfold and dead drunk on a windy night. This is important in barges as in all ships, and sea films never seem to realize it. But on top of the realism is a crazy Vigo world of symbols and images. The mate forward has his cabin stuffed with bric-a-brac from junk shops and from deep sea voyages. He too, more monstrously, represents romance: with shells, sword fish, pictures of harlots, musical boxes, and the pickled hands of a departed shipmate. He is tattooed—as he proudly demonstrates to the eager skipperess—to the nines. The trip ashore is similarly rendered. Here romance is not described but imaged in the crazy antics of a *colporteur* or ribbon man, who cycles down high hills, is a first rate sleight of hand merchant, and, for no reason at all, appears occasionally with a one man band. It is a novel and fascinating way of story-telling, and Vigo is clearly one of the most imaginative young directors in Europe.

JOHN GRIERSON.

DR MABUSE

Production: Nerofilm. Script: Thea van Harbou. Direction: Fritz Lang. Photography: Fritz Arno Wagner. Sets: Karl Volbrecht. Distribution: A. Fried. With Gustav Diessl, Rudolph Klein-Rogge, Otto Wernicke, Oscar Beregi, Vera Liessem, Camilla Spira. Length: 10,620 feet.

This is the last film made by Fritz Lang in Germany, produced by Nebenzahl's Nero company which sponsored *Kameradschaft*, *Ariane*, *M.* and *Atlantide*. Much celluloid has been spoiled since the original crazy exploits of the hypnotist Mabuse were shown in part form in England but even now, in days of sound, Lang remains unchanged. Perhaps the literary use of noise assists the building of the suspense of which he is so fond, as in the opening of this picture; probably the American gang films have loaned an idea or two, as in the car murder; but the formula remains essentially the same. Incredible robberies, the unseen master-criminal, the sub-sect-

ion B and the murder squad, street corner bombing and houses that flood and unflood at will—these are the authentic Lang materials by way of Thea von Harbou from the Magnet Library. Here are all the old vices and not so many of the virtues. The story is atrocious drivel, the reasoning does not bear inspection, human psychology is totally missing; but the detail is elaborately contrived and some of the situations ingenious and it is all well staged in the good old German style. There is the usual capable playing by Gustav Diessl, Klein-Rogge and Otto Wernicke, reminding us how capable is this school of German acting. What a pity that Lang is so superficial! You feel he has a flair for sensational incident and a knowledge of melodrama which might be useful in cinema if only he had some foundation on which to base his work. Imagine, for instance, a Lang film of the burning of the Reichstag. There is nobody who could handle better the nefarious plot and counterplot, the elaborate scheming that preceded the crime, the precautions undertaken, the drama of the event itself and the floodgates of murder that it opened. It is all astonishing melodrama surpassing anything that Lang or his Mabuse could conceive. But the subsequent trial would need a greater mind than Lang's, a Pabst or a Pudovkin, to bring satire to the tragi-comedy of its chain of self-exposures.

PAUL ROTH.

CRIME WITHOUT PASSION

Production, Direction and Script: Charles MacArthur-Ben Hecht. Associate Direction and Photography: Lee Garmes. Sets: Albert Johnson. Distribution: Paramount. With Claude Rains, Margo, Whitney Bourne, Stanley Ridges. Length: 6,080 feet.

We may be excused for paying more than ordinary attention to this very entertaining melodrama, for it not only marks a new departure in production methods of studio films but presents the Hecht-MacArthur writing team in the new role of producer-writers in an attempt, they tell us, to prove that good pictures can be made with a maximum of intelligence in a minimum of time and expense. This is the first of four pictures commissioned for a Paramount release but shot without Hollywood supervision in the Long Island studios at New York with the technical aid of Lee Garmes, erstwhile ace-photographer of *Zoo in Budapest* and *Shanghai Express* among others. There is nothing especially fresh in this story of a famous criminal lawyer who believes he commits a crime and is ultimately exposed by the skill with which he disguises the murder. It is the familiar mouthpiece story told backwards, with the trial at the beginning instead of at the curtain. But there is something fresh in the treatment applied with its endless succession of original twists, and intelligent dialogue. With the exception of Rains, the

cast plays like human beings instead of actors, maintaining an unnaturally low key, thereby giving emphasis to situations which otherwise would fall into the ordinary rut of melodrama. This particularly applies to Margo, night-club dancer fresh to the screen, who brings here a curiously attractive personality far removed from the orthodox star's prescription. Whitney Bourne, Manhattan socialite, is not so successful, obviously playing to Hollywood precedent. To Garmes, I think, must go credit for most of the direction and also, I am afraid, the self-conscious artiness which now and again crops up to destroy the realism of the treatment. Left alone, these ace-cameramen always seem destined to run amok with arty-impressionism, in this case a double-exposure trick of the lawyer's second self to goad him into false security. It is odd that a man of Garmes's ability should not have realized that sound alone gave all he wanted for this second self gag without throwing back to the crude old ideas of the Germans. Apart from this criticism and the doubtful wisdom of allowing Rains to overact, the film is certainly to be noted as an advance in independent methods and augurs well for coming films from the same team.

PAUL ROTH.

LITTLE FRIEND

Production and Distribution: Gaumont-British. Direction: Berthold Viertel Script: Margaret Kennedy. Photography: Gunthur Krampf. Sets: Alfred Jünge. Editing: Ian Dalrymple, With Matheson Lang, Lydia Sherwood, Nova Pilbeam, Fritz Körtner. Length; 7,650 feet.

There is a solid honesty behind this film which, despite its many shortcomings, I commend to your notice. True, it is doubtful if it would have been produced without the previous examples of *Poil de Carotte* and *La Maternelle*, but this we must accept as part and parcel of the picture business. Of one thing we may be certain, that Viertel believed in his story and was sincere in his direction. His undoing lies in the mistake that Nova Pilbeam is neither mentally nor physically suited to the part she is called upon to fulfil and that his handling of the story is foreign to the essentially English atmosphere that pervades the whole. You can see how successfully he worked with Krampf, Körtner and Jünge because they understood his requirements. But the only member of the remainder who shows comprehension of his aims is Lydia Sherwood, whose sound acting ability stands her in good stead in an underestimated performance of the unhappy mother. For the rest, they are dull and wooden, giving poor Viertel little help and speaking their badly-written lines without feeling or interest. If the treatment generally had been more cinematic, this might not have been so obvious, but

Viertel stays close to the theatrical tradition and scarcely ever dares to embrace the film medium for what it could give him. The interiors are beautifully lit and have that grace of style which we associate with Jünger but the exterior Park scenes are feeble in the extreme. But, and this is the point, it marks a breakaway for Gaumont-British into more worthwhile subjects and for that deserves our recognition.

PAUL ROTH.

LOT IN SODOM

Production, direction and photography: Sibley Watson, Jr., and Melville Webber. Music: Louis Seigel. Length: 2,234 feet.

SURREALISM apart, we know that the film can be more than a mere mirror of reality, or the dramatic simulation of reality. Word strewn epics, symphonies, the sterner stuff of documentary, and even the simple lyric, we are familiar with. But cinema has still other *genres* to develop. It has still the higher reaches of Parnassus to assail. Watson and Webber in their interpretation of the Bible episode of Lot's travail in the city of perversion have had this in mind, and if their film is no more than a self-conscious preening of feathers before spreading the wings for flight, it must be welcomed as an attempt at experiment, even though we deplore the choice of theme and the decadent artiness of its treatment.

To anyone unfamiliar with the Old Testament narrative the film is barely explicit. But that is no concern of poetry. The beauty of its visuals, integrated with Louis Seigel's Hebraic orchestration of sound reflecting mood and intensifying atmosphere, appeals purely to the senses. Distorting mirror and prism are creaky mechanics with which to reach the higher flights, but even so there is achieved a sort of white fire of passion—as in Lot's description of woman's labour—alternating with a cold, harrowing sensuality, whipped up by flute and harp and laid low again by the morose chanting of Hebrew voices. As an achievement in film poetics *Lot in Sodom* is scarcely a milestone, but it is at least a signpost to a road which independent producers might profitably explore.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE SLUMP IS OVER. (*French. Nero Film. Made at Joinville.*)

THE spiritual father of this film is *Le Chemin du Paradis* which some of you may remember with affection. Given as good songs, this film would be as great a success at the box-office. There is a cheerful air of spontaneity about the whole production, which is not to be compared with the mechanical gaieties of René Clair. The story is about a shoe-stringing theatrical company and from the appearance of the film, I should imagine it too, was produced on a shoe-string. The cheerful atmosphere of this kind of production, the happy co-

operative spirit it breeds, has been caught in the story and in the acting. There is an agreeable freshness about the film and though it has not removed my mind from *la crise*, it at least succeeded in doing so for ninety minutes. The sound is indifferent and the print worse but the gaiety shines through. There are none of the arty effects of Clair, nothing is carefully timed to get the maximum effect, yet the very honesty of its fun is infectious. The director is Robert Siodmak, maker of *Menschen am Sonntag* and subsequently with Ufa.

D. F. T.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF DON JUAN (*British. London Films*). Stylistically, this film is what we have come to expect from London Films but it has no other points to commend it except style. It is said that Korda has brought to the screen a sophistication which British pictures have hitherto lacked; but it is the sophistication bred in the Mayfair drawing-rooms of Evelyn Waugh. His other screen accomplishment is a pleasant, if somewhat exact, sense of pictorial composition, accompanied by efficient art direction. But when, as here, he has no Laughton or Bergner to depend on, the film appears threadbare. Douglas Fairbanks with all his graces—and they are many—is not an actor. He is given a part which not only is he incapable of handling but which patently suggests his own swan song (an unfortunate association of ideas for the box-office). The film has a generous gallery of attractive women and Binnie Barnes gets some rousing life into a broad sketch of a barmaid. One or two small parts are noticeably well done, particularly the major-domo. The major-domo has long been a stand-by in British films.

D.F.T.

NIGHT ON THE BARE MOUNTAIN (*French. Film Society*). This short film introduces a new method of animation, the particulars of which are the secret of the inventor, Alexeieff. The general effect is of animated engraving. There is a soft shadowy quality in the form, and none of the hard precision of line associated with cartoons. The forms emerge from space, they have the appearance of dissolving to other forms. Three dimensional qualities seem to be easily achieved, and models in animation can be introduced without disturbing the general style. The film, apart from its technical interest, is an imaginative performance, though difficult to describe. Imagine however, a *Walpurgis Nacht*, in which animated footsteps indicate spirit presences, goblins and hob-goblins appear and disappear and tumble fantastically, scarecrows do a fandango with their shadows on empty hillsides, white horses and black tear across high heaven and skeletons walk. The animation is to the music of Mussorgsky. All film societies should see this film. It is as astonishing and as brilliant a short as they are likely to find.

J.G.

TREASURE ISLAND (*American. M.G.M.*). As we might have anticipated from the film's origin, Stevenson's story has been transformed, if carefully, to provide a starring vehicle for Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper, late of *The Champ*. This Hollywoodian Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins have a stronger personal attachment than Stevenson depicted and the film makes him connive at Silver's escape and suggest in the end that they may one day return to the island for the remainder of the treasure. Jackie Cooper is not equal to the complexities of Jim's character but his performance has the merit of stolid consistency. Beery as Silver is almost all of the film. Stevenson might not have immediately recognized this smooth, smiling villain with a merciless streak craftily concealed, but he would have loved him. Faithfulness to R. L. S. apart, the film is, until the maudlin final scene comes, a lively record of swashbuckling adventure, broad in its sweep (Victor Fleming of *The Virginian* directed), exciting in its photography and, curiously, distinguished by a more stirring sense of British patriotism than most of our own films. F.H.

CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTÉ (*French. Film Society*). Engendered doubtless, by the Stavisky scandal, this satirical comedy of high finance is amusing and well made. Its satire is not cinematic, but lies in the script and acting. Raimu who plays the part of a financier who builds a moribund corset shop into a modern finance corporation, carries the film on his skilful shoulders. Pierre Colombier's direction holds the balance neatly between fantasy and comedy. Skilful and successful rather than brilliant and inspiring.

DAWN TO DAWN (*American. Cameron Macpherson*). A moving little pastoral film which relates in sombre but not depressing terms the story of a jealous invalid father, his repressed and work-laden daughter and a young man who wanders by chance into her life and out again—a short story whose length (3,000 feet) is exactly appropriate to its theme. The sincere direction of Josef Berne, the imaginative photography of Paul Ivano and the finely economical dialogue give the film distinction. Julie Hayden is the girl, Ole M. Ness the father and Frank Eklof the youth.

BLOSSOM TIME (*British. B.I.P.*). This lyrical romance of the music of Franz Schubert, with Richard Tauber as the composer, is the finest film that has come from B.I.P. for years. Under Paul Stein's direction, Tauber has lost the fussy affectation which spoilt his previous screen appearances; he sings superbly Schubert's more popular compositions and his impersonation of the composer as a naïve and forlorn figure has considerable emotional appeal. Skilfully the film is filled with music—orchestra, choral and solo singing. Photography is finely in mood and there is a lovely sequence of schoolboys singing in a meadow.

LITTLE MAN, WHAT NOW? (*American. Universal*). This adaptation of Hans Fallada's novel is faithful as far as it goes. Inevitably it omits the deeper intimacies of the original and unfortunately it leaves out also some of the sterner qualities from the character of the husband which made more comprehensible his young wife's unfaltering devotion. The emphasis of the film is more idyllic than economic: Frank Borzage is still in his Seventh Heaven. The story is told with extreme simplicity and sincerity and if it is emotionally a little strenuous the natural acting of Margaret Sullavan and Douglass Montgomery keeps it clear of sentiment.

FILM SOCIETIES

OF ITS own volition, without any organized plans for expansion, the film societies movement is growing rapidly throughout the country. The formation of several new societies in important centres is recorded in our notes, and preliminary negotiations are in progress prior to the setting up of similar bodies in other districts. An important development is the tendency of societies to co-operate even more closely than formerly with the trade. Northwich Film Society, following the practice of Billingham, is now holding its performances in a local cinema in the course of the ordinary weekly programme instead of in its own hall. In a small town where competition in the supply of entertainment is likely to cause bitterness this is a wise course to follow, so long as the society reserves the right to exhibit privately films which, because of the nature of their appeal, are not suitable for general audiences. In any case it is a move to induce and support the public exhibition of worthwhile pictures and is therefore to be welcomed. In districts where it is impossible to obtain permission to hold private performances this method of exhibition is certainly preferable to simply doing nothing.

In still smaller centres, or in towns where a serious interest in the cinema is not sufficiently developed to justify the formation of an exhibiting society, it has been suggested that "film circles" should be formed. Wherever there are a few cinema enthusiasts they should get together if only for the benefits to be derived from friendly discussion and organized study. But if they are true enthusiasts they will have something of the preacher's zeal and will soon convert others to their way of thinking. Thus the modest little circles will grow and in time will become the nucleus of more important organizations. How can such circles be formed and how would they function? A letter to the local press, or an advertisement, which should make it clear that the proposed circle is not a star "fan" club, will quickly bring together those who are interested in the idea. Then by means of combined study, discussion, lectures, etc., a fuller understanding of cinema will develop. The local cinema may be prevailed upon to book certain films in which members are specially interested, in return for which the circle can arrange to organize public support for the picture, and for its members and friends the circle can give occasional performances on sub-standard apparatus. The smaller towns, and even the villages, need not look with envy at the large cities with their apparently greater opportunities for securing worthwhile films. The formation of film circles may be the first step to securing similar facilities.

Cinema Quarterly will be glad to assist any one desirous of forming such a circle and will willingly supply whatever information may be required regarding films, the organizing of shows, apparatus or lectures. We shall also be pleased to publish the address of anyone wishing to get in touch with other readers with a view to forming a circle.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. The tenth season will consist of eight performances at the Tivoli on Sunday afternoons. Students of universities and other institutions, as well as film technicians with a salary not exceeding £10 per week, are eligible for membership at a reduced subscription of 15s. The ordinary rates of subscription are 66s., 45s., and 26s. 6d. The final selection of films for the season is not yet available, but there are many interesting prospects including, Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*, *Atalante*, Dziga-Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin*, Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler* and Basse's *So lebt ein Volk*.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., Stephen Mitchell, 15 Golden Square. The first season of this new society will consist of five performances to be given in The Picture House on Sunday afternoons. Lectures will also be arranged. A low subscription of 10s. is intended to secure a large membership. The first performance on November 18 will include *Leibelei*.

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Norton-on-Tees. There is no formal membership of this society, which enters upon its fifth season with a credit balance of £84. Anyone may come to its Wednesday twice nightly performances, which are sometimes attended by over 1,000. Oct. 10, Reiniger's *Carmen*, Elton's *Under the City*, Disney Cartoon, *Poil de Carotte*.

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., B. S. Page, 21 Carpenter Road. The fourth season will consist of seven Sunday afternoon performances at a subscription of 10s. 6d. First performance, Oct. 21, *Don Quixote*, *Industrial Britain*, *Canal Barge*, Disney's *Noah's Ark*.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street. Subscription, 15s. for six Sunday afternoon performances in the Davis Theatre. Paul Rotha and R. C. Sherriff were guests at a luncheon given on Oct. 21, prior to the first performances which consisted of *The Floorwalker*, *The Bridge*, *In der Nacht*, and *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 St. Andrew Street. In order to widen the influence of the Guild the subscription has been reduced from a guinea to 12s. 6d. The first performance on October 28 will consist of *Charlemagne*, *Pett and Pott*, *Weather Forecast* and *Spring on the Farm*. Lecturers in a course on the Theory and Technique of the Film will include Andrew Buchanan, John Grierson, Alberto Cavalcanti and John Taylor.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, sixth season. Subscription 12s. 6d. Sunday evening performances in Cranston Picture House, commencing Oct. 14. The programme will consist of *Industrial Britain*, Reiniger's *Carmen*, *In der Nacht*, and *La Maternelle*. Lectures will be given throughout the season.

HULL FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., Hannchen M. Drasdo, 81 Beverley Road. Meanwhile this new society will operate on 16mm. and performances will be given in a private studio. The subscription is 15s. for six shows, which will include *Warning Shadows*, *Waxworks*, *Crazy Ray* and some Russian films.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College. Subscription, 10s. 6d. A series of twice nightly Saturday performances has again been arranged at Vaughan College. Lectures will be given by Mary Field, Ivor Montagu and others.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford, 5. Eight performances will be given in the Rivoli, Rusholme, on Saturdays at 4 p.m. Subscription 10s. First performance, Sept. 22. *Thunder over Mexico*, *Tonende Handschrift*, *Canal Barge*. October 20. *La Maternelle*, *Industrial Britain*.

MANCHESTER JEWISH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., Freda Platt, 86 Gt. Clowes Street, Salford, 7. In course of formation.

NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., H. A. Green, 6 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, N.16. A first season of eight monthly performances will be given at the Plaza, Dalston Junction, on Sunday evenings. A well-balanced programme of new Continental films and revivals has been arranged. Subscription, 10s.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. By arrangement with Cheshire County Cinemas, Ltd., performances will now be given on Tuesday evenings in the Pavilion. These performances are open to everyone and there is no subscription. Season tickets are available at 10s. 6d., 8s. and 5s. and tickets may be had for single performances at prices from 2s. to 4d. While this scheme has certain limitations, in so far, for instance, as only registered films can be shown, it might be copied with success in towns where it is impossible to arrange private or Sunday performances. There are hundreds of centres throughout the country where this system of working ought to be immediately practicable. First performance, Sept. 25. *Daily Dozen at the Zoo, Industrial Britain, Don Quixote.*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY continues its performances as before at the Electa Cinema. Oct. 21. *Ces Messieurs de la Santé, Silly Symphony* and *Mickey Mouse.*

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrison, Flat B, End Street. The second season commences on Oct. 28 with *La Maternelle, Krakotoa,* and *Harlequin.*

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY will commence its fourth season in November. All performances are now given on Sunday afternoons. The Society has opened a branch office at Winchester, where nearly 100 members were obtained last season. Hon. Sec. J. S. Fairfax-Jones; Southampton, D. A. Yeoman, 21 Ethelbert Avenue; Winchester, Ruth Keyser and C. J. Blackburne, 12 St. Swithun Street.

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY, c/o Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle. Half-season subscription, 6s. Three performances before Christmas will be held in the Haymarket Theatre on Sunday evenings. A clubroom has been secured for meetings and displays of sub-standard films. First performance, Oct. 14. *Morgenrot, Tonende Handschrift, Don Dougio Farabanca.*

WEST OF SCOTLAND WORKERS FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., James Hough, 16 Balerno Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2. This new Society has been formed "for the advancement of education" in the working classes "by the exhibition of films of an international and cultural character." Twelve Sunday evening performances will be given for a subscription of 10s. First performance, Oct. 7. *Road to Life, Invasion of Shanghai, Paris Markets.* Oct. 21, *Mutter Krausen, Zuyder Zee Dyke, Disney Cartoon.*

CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY will give six Saturday morning performances at the Everyman, Hampstead. Programmes will include Westerns, cartoons, animal, documentary and nature films. Stuart Legg, Andrew Buchanan and Mary Field will give talks on how films are made. The subscription is 10s.

NEGOTIATIONS are proceeding for the amalgamation of the Scottish Educational Cinema Society (Education Offices, Bath Street, Glasgow) and the Scottish Educational Sight and Sound Association (17 South Saint Andrew Street, Edinburgh) and it is probable that the new organization will be known as the Scottish Educational Film Association. While both organizations were national in constitution, they were largely regional in influence and the new arrangement will avoid over-lapping and facilitate development. The former has a membership of over 600 while a Lanarkshire branch has over 500 members. Organization of film performances for children is a feature of the Edinburgh organization's work.

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STUART LEGG, PAUL ROTH, BASIL WRIGHT.

IFMA'S FIRST SUMMER SCHOOL AT WELWYN.

"SELDOM the time, place and loved one, together." The loved one being, as a stage actress once said, that tin prostitute, the film. Digswell Park is a charming place, ideal for the first Summer School. The weather, an important factor, was kind. The rumour that there was a movie-maker, with cine-camera, under every chair is denied. Admitted, there were some queer angles, but none under chairs.

MARY FIELD on "The Instructional Film."

Her knowledge of the subject, her personality and wit enabled Miss Field to give an excellent lecture on that branch of the cinema in which she is expert. She is one of the pioneers of the instructional film and amateurs would do well to follow her example and make films for the class-room. The instructional film can make great use of animated diagrams and maps and here again Miss Field shows the way for the amateur who wants to do something better than filming plays.

JOHN GRIERSON on "Sound."

I think I am justified in saying that John Grierson was our star-turn. Just as, in the early days of cinema, the film was merely a record of what a play-goer might expect to see from the front row of the stalls, so it is with sound to-day. Grierson explained how most directors think only in terms of what we might call unbroken sound, unedited—as were the early visuals. Sound can be cut, dissolved, superimposed, voices can be used for conveying atmosphere instead of dialogue. Rhyming, chanting, blank verse and the subjective word-building of James Joyce are all material for the sound-film. In a short time Grierson had sketched out the possible future of sound in films for the next five or ten years. A strange sea as yet uncharted.

STUART LEGG on "Shooting."

There are many people and places that just won't be filmed and come right, but Stuart Legg can make it if anyone can. He told us how for hours and days he has striven over one shot and then, when in sight of victory, has had it ruined by an unsuspected onlooker. Dealing with the person who always knows how a film should be

made, shooting in confined space without the facilities for high-powered lighting, having too much light in the wrong place and the innumerable difficulties to be overcome in shooting documentary—these were some of the things Legg spoke about. Several 35 mm. cameras were demonstrated and fitted with various lenses and filters, Legg explaining their uses.

BASIL WRIGHT on "Cutting."

A fearsome subject to have to talk about for over an hour, but Basil Wright came through with flags flying. He showed how by different cutting and juxtapositioning of the same shots the content of the whole can be entirely altered. It is not possible to have a shooting script anything like the detailed instructions of a studio production. Documentary needed a different working procedure, Wright explained. He spoke of how the welding of two sequences of different content could be carried out to hold the continuity by cutting on similarity of movement.

PETER LE NEVE FOSTER on "A Movie-maker in Moscow."

By giving the simple unadorned truth about U.S.S.R., le Neve Foster, perhaps unconsciously, debunked the Soviet propaganda of happy ending. Fatalism is still extant in Russia, dreamers have not been replaced by hard-headed technicians and still nobody worries. Foster visited the new Sovkino "Hollywood," of enormous size, with huge revolving stage, immense tank for aquatic scenes, large cutting and dressing rooms, all wired for sound, with everything a director could wish for—but it wasn't finished. He told us of the only training college for film-makers in the world and of his meeting with Pudovkin. This was afterwards illustrated with a 16 mm. film taken at the time.

W. G. FARR, of the British Film Institute, gave a talk upon the purpose, aims and functions of the Institute and showed what demand there is for instructional and documentary films in training centres and schools.

Films were projected every night during the week-end and included the following:

Three classics which were well received: *St. Joan the Maid*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Siegfried* (Pathe, 9.5 mm.).

The King's Visit to Manchester by Peter le Neve Foster. (16 mm.) This is one of the best news-reel items I have seen. Atmosphere of waiting and excitement is definitely created and the shots of vast crowds and attendant incidents make me wish that le Neve Foster had the supervision of some of the news-reels inflicted upon us. Good documentary this. A copy has gone to America for showing.

The Outer Isles by W. L. George (16 mm.). Fine photography of the local industries and occupations carried on in the Hebrides. An interesting documentary with a feeling for atmosphere.

Cable Ship. Legg and Shaw.

The Hunger Marchers by J. W. Harris (16 mm.) An account of the recent march starting from several towns all over Britain and converging on London. But where was the siege of the County Hall? The film was mainly about the part played in the procession by the Cambridge University Socialists. I understand that this film has yet to be edited. Here is a chance to strengthen the idea of the forces converging.

L. Broadbent had three 16 mm. films shown. A comedy, a holiday affair and one of a holiday in the Channel Isles. There were some interesting night scenes in one of these and some good shots of holiday crowds. All three were good. The other 16 mm. film was *Lancashire at Work* by D. F. Taylor, a Travel Association Film. Commentary is in preparation for 35 mm. The reason that Lancashire, the cotton spinning centre, did come to be situated where it is—namely the chemical properties of the rain-water, the use of power in production and the various industries grouped round Lancashire—are all shown in this well-photographed documentary.

G.P.O. FILM PRODUCTIONS.

Cable Ship. Legg and Shaw.

Repairing a damaged under-sea cable—the part played by the cable ship in international communications. A new line in commentaries is taken by giving the workman on the job the task of explaining what he is doing. There is more food for thought in the construction of the sound here than in a dozen sex-dramas.

6.30 Collection. Grierson, Anstey and Watt.

The first 100% sound film. The Romance of the Post Office sounds a pretty grisly business but a fantasy has been made out of the rise and fall of correspondence in the 6.30 p.m. West London Postal District simply by using sound. As the postmen return and the keys of the boxes mount higher, tempo increases to a crescendo. With enchanting destinations, snatches of whistling, ring of keys, roar of lorries and clatter of trucks—a glorious racket is orchestrated into a minor symphony of rush, bustle and efficiency.

Pett and Pott. Grierson. Cavalcanti. This is more than comedy; it is gentle satire, not Swift but Thomas Love Peacock. Is the telephone as bringer of domestic bliss, satire on the Post Office? Anyhow, everyone is happy and that is the idea of the film—goodwill. The music is ideal and the way in which the sound is shaped is an inspiration. Nearly all the staff of the Unit appear to be in this jolly affair and it is obvious that they have enjoyed it. The clergyman was good and I predict a future for this un-named actor.

Weather Forecast. Grierson. Evelyn Spice. "We have been asked to broadcast the following gale warning to shipping." What lies behind those words, how the gale was known to be coming, how that knowledge was communicated all round England and finally to the Continent, with shipping warned, is shown in this documentary. The sound was technically good but do winds whistle like that and what were those thumps? Some good photography here.

IFMA (LONDON GROUP).

At the meeting of members it was decided to form a group for the production of educational and documentary films. *Markets* is the provisional title of a documentary dealing with three London food markets, Covent Garden, Smithfield and Billingsgate. Members' language has become much "heartier" of late, since they have taken to snooping round these markets at five and six in the morning. Thomas Baird was appointed director for this first production of the London Group.

Thomas Baird was elected Hon. Secretary of the Association. J. C. H. Dunlop was re-elected Hon. Treasurer and thanked for his past services. Edmund Lightfoot was also re-elected Hon. Asst. Secretary and thanked for his services. Leslie Beisiegel was elected to edit the bulletin, and these pages.

A committee of the above and N. Spurr and E. E. Ward was formed. Many thanks are due to Peter le Neve Foster for his chairmanship of the Summer School.

IFMA BULLETIN.

Besides these pages in *Cinema Quarterly* there is to be issued a Bulletin of information and news of members. This sheet will appear between the four issues of *Cinema Quarterly* at intervals of six to seven weeks; therefore members will have eight bulletins a year. If members want to unburden themselves of some noble idea or have a suggestion to make, or seek a co-operator in a film, please use the Bulletin. Write, in the first place, to Leslie Beisiegel, IFMA, 32 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.

. . . AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Things being on a firmer footing owing to the meeting and collusion of members determined to storm the citadel of documentary, the future is something to look forward to. If a genius doesn't arise from the ranks of amateurs and astound the film world it won't be IFMA's fault.

AN EXHIBITION OF KINEMATOGRAPHY will be held at the Royal Photographic Society Galleries, 35 Russell Square, London, from Nov. 6 to Nov 30. The exhibition will comprise apparatus, stills and films, and there will be a series of lectures on various aspects of the cinema, illustrated by films. The following meetings will be open to the public. Friday, November 9, 7 p.m., "Experiences of a Cameraman in Ceylon." Basil Wright. Saturday, Nov. 10, 3 p.m. Films entered for the R.P.S. competition. Friday, Nov. 16, 7 p.m. "Sound." S. S. Watkins. "Schufftan." W. D. Woolsey. "Art Direction." E. Carrick. Saturday, Nov. 17, 3 p.m. G.P.O. films. Friday, Nov. 23, 7 p.m. "Films from the Projectionists Point of View," S. T. Perry. Saturday, Nov. 24, 3 p.m. Advertising and Commercial films. Friday, Nov. 30, 7 p.m. "The Educational Film." Mary Field.

G. A. SHAW, who was one of the original members of IFMA, had to resign the position of Hon. Secretary, now held by Thomas Baird, on going abroad. He is now a director with Orient Film Productions and though unable to work for IFMA in an administrative capacity hopes to continue a friendly association, and to give any help he can.

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

Volume 3, Number 2

WINTER

1935

THE SCENARIO AGAIN. The publication in book form of the scenario of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* again raises the question of the function and scope of the scenarist in relation to direction, cutting and the whole scheme of production. In his introduction to the present volume* Ernest Betts, film critic of the "Sunday Express," claims that the publication of *Henry VIII* introduces a new form of literature. He also denies any knowledge of the meaning of "true cinema." These statements, taken together, are symptomatic of much that is wrong with cinema to-day—an inability to escape from the narrative form of literature and an unconcerned ignorance of the true nature of film form.

If the function of the scenarist is to create the film on paper and of the director to re-create it on celluloid, it would appear that either the one is being denied his rightful recognition as the real progenitor of the production or the other is being given undue credit for work which is interpretive rather than creative. This is more or less the case, except that the scenarist, being a writer rather than a visual artist, often lacks ability in the use of plastic imagery and expressive sound, which the director with a real understanding of the powers of his medium would employ in preference to the wordiness of literary narration. In actual practice the director has the power to alter the script as he thinks fit; but a work conceived as a whole by one creative imagination cannot be altered by another, working on a totally different plane, without disastrous effects.

The separation of scenario-construction and direction into two different functions is an artificial one, introduced originally because the first producers were showmen or technicians who could no more conceive a story than they could act the juvenile lead. The system is continued partly out of habit and partly because most of the original producers are still in control of the studios. The accepted idea that the film is a "collective" art is also responsible for a continuance of the convention. The production of a film undoubtedly demands team work. So does the erection of a building. But without

* London: Methuen, 3s. 6d.

an architect to inspire the draughtsmen and instruct the builders, the result would lack that æsthetic harmony which characterizes all great architecture. Similarly, unless a film is dominated by the supreme personality of a creative artist in undisputed control over every stage of production it will suffer from weakness of character and uncertainty of design.

The question is not whether the scenarist or the director should be given command, for obviously the same person ought to be responsible for both tasks. But until something is done to break down the present stupid conventions and make possible the development of new genius capable of undertaking the wider responsibility of full creative control, it is idle to talk of the scenario as having significance either for literature or the film.

COLOUR ARRIVES. Six years' practice of the use of sound has brought us only to the fringe of learning how to use it with artistic perception—and now we are faced with colour. At least five separate systems, each with elaborate claims to recognition, are already competing for introduction to the screen, and whether we like it or not the colour-film will soon be an accepted form of cinema. That directors have still enough to learn about sound and movement, that the audience has never asked for colour nor felt the want of it, that exhibitors do not welcome the cost of installing new apparatus—all that is beside the point. The film of entertainment, declare the producers, requires another infusion of novelty, and just as sound was thrust on the cinema by the competitive genius of Warner Bros., the black-and-white film may soon be swept from the screen by the flood of colour released by avid producers anxious to dazzle their rivals.

That they may also dazzle the audience is equally possible. Judging from efforts such as *Radio Parade* and the final reel in *The House of Rothschild*, colour definition is still far from perfect, and the essential qualities of tonal harmony and contrast are apparently unknown. Cautious second thoughts made Gaumont-British withdraw the colour sequence in *The Iron Duke*, but Hollywood rushes ahead with all-colour versions of *Becky Sharp*, *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *The Three Musketeers*. There are no second thoughts in America. And soon the rest of the world will be stampeding in its wake.

Much as we may regret its precipitous imposition, we cannot afford to scoff and ignore the advent of colour. Its development is as inevitable as the development of sound. Even Chaplin, lone champion of the silent film, has been able to remain staunch to his former medium only by the subtlest of compromise. Is it not better

for everyone, theorists and craftsmen alike, to face the matter frankly and give timely consideration to the possibilities and dangers of the use of colour? Only thus will it be possible to avoid the chaos and insensibilities which followed the commercial exploitation of sound.

CENSORSHIP AGITATION. A deputation led by the Archbishop of Canterbury and representative of the various uplift organizations throughout the country recently waited on the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Secretary of State for Scotland, to urge the setting up of a Government Inquiry into the working of film censorship in Great Britain, with power to recommend constructive reform and improvement of the present conditions.

A similar deputation headed by Bernard Shaw and representative of the radical intellectuals of the community might reasonably have presented the same request. Both bodies of opinion agree that the existing censorship is a farce. It is too lax. It is too rigid. It winks at indecency. It stifles art. It pleases nobody.

Do we require a stricter censorship or a more intelligent one? Or none? In reply to the present agitation the Home Secretary is officially reported as indicating "the difficulty of reaching general agreement on a matter largely of taste." Even the righteous and omniscient Mr. MacDonald declared that "Inquiries, particularly, perhaps, where any question of morals is involved, did not always yield all the results expected of them." He ought to know. The suppression of political propaganda, of course, is much simpler than dealing with matters of morals. There are methods. . . .

But Wardour Street may rest in peace.

NORMAN WILSON.

Cinema Quarterly is obtainable through any bookshop, but if any difficulty is experienced an annual subscription (Great Britain, 4s. 6d.; Abroad, 7s. 6d.) should be sent to the Manager, *Cinema Quarterly*, 24 N.W. Thistle Street Lane, Edinburgh, 2. Binding cases for Volume Two are now ready, price 3s. 6d. each, postage 6d. extra. No further expense is necessary as these are self-adjusting. Cases for Volume Three, in which each copy may be placed as issued, are also ready. Bound copies of Volume One are available at 11s. 6d.; Volume Two, 7s. 6d.

THE MUSICIAN AND THE FILM

WALTER LEIGH

ALTHOUGH from its earliest beginnings the cinema has employed music as an important part of the entertainment which it offers, the place of music has been an almost entirely subordinate one. In the latter days of the silent films, certain super-productions were presented at the big theatres with specially composed music played by large orchestras, and just before the sound-film arrived, some experiments on a small scale were made in synchronization of the film with a mechanical organ or piano, and a synchronous apparatus was invented for the conductor of the cinema orchestra. But excess of zeal on the part of the musician often caused the musical accompaniment to obtrude itself too persistently on the consciousness of the audience, and the enjoyment of some films was considerably impaired by noisy orchestras which, in seeking to create appropriate atmosphere, would often stress and underline unnecessarily the action of the film.

The sound-film arrived just at the right time to save an embarrassing situation. Its success entailed the acceptance of a new convention by the audience, the make-believe that sound actually proceeded from the shadows on the screen. This effort of reconciling sound with sight was readily made by the audience, and the apparently impossible—a “talking picture”—was achieved. For the first time the audience, in order to understand the entertainment, had to listen as well as to watch. Hitherto they had only noticed the music when it somehow disturbed them; and they were aware of its absence if a film was run in silence. But now the sound was no longer a mere accompaniment, but an integral part of the film; and for the first time they became sound-conscious.

Unfortunately, however, this miracle of synchronization was so universally emphasized by film producers that little advantage was taken of the possibilities offered by the new mechanical device. Indeed, at the present time, some six years later, the majority of films still show how great a set-back film production suffered from

the coming of sound; long stretches of dialogue are synchronized with the moving faces of the speakers, all the natural sounds are carefully synchronized with their corresponding visuals, and the result has the effect of a stage play observed through a telescope; the advantages which the film has over the stage are exploited hardly at all.

In consequence of this restricted use of sound, the audience's sound-consciousness, which made such a promising start, has not been allowed to develop; indeed, the decline in popularity and virtual abandonment of the theme song seems to show that the sound is listened to less consciously than it was. On the other hand, now that synchronized sound is no longer a novelty, there are signs of the development of a new technique in the use of sound, not merely as an explanation to the ear of what the eye is watching, or as a background to keep the ear pleasantly occupied while the eye devotes itself to the action, but as a part of the action itself, as expressive in its own way as the visuals, and a necessary complement to them. And it is in this field that the musician can prove of direct use in the making of a film, and take a more responsible part than hitherto.

It is beginning to be recognized that discipline is as necessary in sound as in picture. Whereas the picture is carefully cut with due regard to form, rhythm, and emotional effects, the series of natural sounds which are normally synchronized with the picture form only a random string of words and noises, some helpful to the sense of the picture, some an adequate but no more than discreet accompaniment, and some actually disturbing in their effect. The eye is accustomed to constant changes of focus, and finds their effect pleasing; but the ear is not thus accustomed, and finds the abrupt shiftings from sound to sound, which follow quick changes of scene, difficult to accept. Moreover, there is an important difference between the sound heard in the cinema and that heard in the ordinary theatre. When watching a stage play, we select for ourselves, out of the sounds which proceed from various parts of the stage, those which we are to listen to, such as dialogue and revolver-shots, and disregard entirely all the unimportant sounds such as the footsteps of the actors, clicks of cigarette-cases, striking of matches, and shutting of doors. But in the cinema, all the sounds, proceeding as they do from a single point, the loud-speaker, are listened to with equal attention, with the result that sometimes a particular sound, say of footsteps, may be charged with a sinister meaning that is quite unintended. Every sound in a film must be a significant one; there is no room for extraneous sounds. Therefore the effect of each sound must be properly and carefully calculated.

The musician, then, the specialist in sound and its emotional

effects, must be brought in to organize the sounds into a score in which the effect of each one is calculated in relation to the picture and to the other sounds. He will do well to abandon many musical conventions on which he has been brought up, and attempt to approach this new problem of film-sound as a fresh art with many unexplored possibilities, which is only now starting to make its own conventions.

He finds four kinds of sound at his disposal:—

- (1) Music.
- (2) Natural sound, synchronized (including speech).
- (3) Natural sound, used contrapuntally.
- (4) "Sound effects," for emotional or atmospheric purposes.

(1) *Music* undoubtedly fulfils certain functions which nothing else does: it can excite the emotions more powerfully than either spoken word or natural sound. This is because its significance is conventional and imaginary. It is an artificial organization of sound for purely emotional purposes, a representation of physical movement in terms of sound and rhythm. In a film it may be either given its full weight, and perhaps, at emotional peaks, even be allowed to dominate the picture, or it may have only secondary importance as an atmospheric background, possibly with other more important sounds superimposed. The composer approaching the film problem for the first time will be struck by one especially important fact, namely, that in film-music more than in any other kind of music the greatest virtue is economy. A phrase of five bars lasting twenty seconds suitably fitted to thirty feet of picture may express as much as a whole slow movement of a symphony. One minute is quite a considerable length for a piece of music in a film. The academic principles of leisurely formal development are therefore of little use in the composition of film-music, though they may well be employed in the construction of the whole film and its sound-score. The same need for economy applies to the instrumentation; four instruments may well provide a better effect than forty, and a piece that would sound painfully thin and ridiculous in the concert-hall will be perfectly satisfactory over the microphone. It may be said without presumption that the peculiar powers of the microphone have, with the exception of one or two isolated experiments of which little notice has been taken, not been exploited to much advantage up to the present. The most obvious possibility is that of balancing, by placing at suitable distances from the microphone, those instruments whose normal volumes are entirely unequal. The film-composer has to recognize that the much-despised "canned" quality of film-music is actually its most important characteristic and greatest virtue.

(2) *Synchronized natural sound* makes its appeal to the reason; its effect on the emotions is incidental. Its main use is to help on the action; it has largely taken over the functions of the sub-title in the silent film. Being *ipso facto* tied to the visuals, its value is dependent on them: it does not, as music does, add anything which is not inherent in them, but only amplifies and explains them. Its effect is particularly satisfying in the case of marked rhythmic movements which obviously produce a noise, such as hammering; the audience, having made its necessary effort of make-believe that the sounds are actually produced by the shadows on the screen, feels disturbed if its expectations are disappointed. Similarly, if the facial movements of speech are prominent on the screen, the audience is justified in its desire to hear the words spoken, and will feel irritated if those words are not in perfect synchronization. It is not, of course, by any means necessary that the actual sound made at the time the picture was shot should be used. In post-synchronizing a film it is often found that a particular noise is more satisfactory when reproduced artificially in the studio. In this field the microphone has been far more exploited than in music.

(3) The use of *natural sound in counterpoint* is a new device, and the most important development since the coming of the sound-film. It makes a special demand on the audience's power of concentration, in that they must be ready to listen to given sounds as bound up with, and yet separate from, the picture. It is, in fact, an appeal to the emotions through the reason. Its use is similar to that of music, whose appeal to the emotions is direct; but the value of the sounds, instead of being intrinsic as in music, is allusive. The *sense* of the sounds is related to the *sense* of the picture, and a specific emotion results. This use of sound is not a mere stunt; it is essential to the further development of the sound-film, a step towards a new and far more expressive form of film art. When sound has achieved its proper freedom, the film will be justified in claiming the place once held by opera.

(4) The use of *sound effects*, not allusively, but so to speak musically, for directly emotional purposes, follows as the next step after the contrapuntal use of natural sound. The possibilities in this field are as yet unexplored, but it is clear that since the vocabulary of the sound-composer comprises all the known sounds that it is possible to record, there is nothing to prevent his orchestrating other than purely musical sounds to produce certain effects. Since Satie employed the typewriter in *Parade* there have been several instances of non-musical noises combined rhythmically with music, and in films the noise of a train as a percussion basis to music, and the Hans Sachs method of hammering as in *Man of Aran*, are fairly familiar. But the more subtle use of noises for their own sake, to

create certain atmospheres in the same way as music does, has still to be developed, and it is undoubtedly in this field that the most creative advances and the richest discoveries will be made.

In the film *The Song of Ceylon*, an attempt has been made to make use of the above suggestions in constructing a sound-score which has a definite shape, and not only is an accompaniment to the visuals, but adds an element which they do not contain. The film has, in fact, been cut throughout with an eye to the sound-score. Its form is musically conceived; an analysis of its four movements would read like that of a symphony. Each sound has been selected for its seeming inevitability, as harmonies are in music. Even the commentary is calculated as an effect and not as a necessary nuisance. The chief aims of the sound-score are simplicity and clarity. The audience's difficulty in co-ordinating sight and sound has been recognized, and confusion has been avoided as far as possible. Two kinds of music have been used: the native singing and drumming for realistic purposes, and the western orchestra in an attempt at a palatable combination of Sinhalese and European idioms, for atmospheric and emotional purposes. The two extremes, music and synchronized natural sound, are used respectively for emotional high-spots and points of rest. Non-synchronized sound is used a great deal for various specific purposes. An example is the distant bark of a dog heard during a shot of a native building a hut; the implication of the dog is a hint at village life not far away, and the effect of the combination of picture and sound in their context is to foreshadow a contented domestic life in the house now being built. The sound of a train is continued over a shot of an elephant pushing down a tree, and slowed up to correspond with its efforts. Morse and radio announcers reciting market prices are heard over shots of tea-pickers, sounds of shipping over the gathering of coker-nuts. Sinhalese speech, being presumed to be unintelligible to the audience, is used purely as a sound with its obvious connotation, except where a close-up of a speaker demands synchronized speech.

One or two experiments have also been made with the microphone. The vibrations of gongs have been picked up by swinging the microphone close up to the gong after it was struck. Some percussion instruments are used whose virtue is only discernible through the microphone. A particular attempt is also made at an instrumentation suitable for "canning." And all the natural sounds have been artificially produced in the studio, occasionally by very unlikely means. That it shows examples of a few of the possibilities offered by an entirely new approach to the whole problem of sound is the chief claim of the film.

THE FUNCTION OF THE ART DIRECTOR

ALBERTO. CAVALCANTI

FIRST of all, why are sets generally used in films? Often the scenes which they represent exist in nature and could be shot. There must be strong reasons for the widespread practice of building sets when nature itself is readily available. Money is not the deciding factor. On the one hand, it cost more money to shoot *Madame Sans Gene* in the Palace at Fontainebleau than it would have cost to build three times the number of sets for the same script in Hollywood. On the other hand, elaborate and expensive sets are often built when the real scenes can be shot more cheaply nearby.

Sets are not built either out of necessity or economy. There are other reasons, some psychological, some practical. First there is the question of how the set affects the acting. Most directors find that they get better acting on a set than they get from acting in real surroundings. After all, most film actors have been trained on the stage where they have been accustomed to working among scenery. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should feel more at home on a set than against a background of real life, and that their style of acting should agree best with artificial surroundings.

But the chief reason why sets help the acting lies deeper still. A lack of ease in acting in natural surroundings exists even in those without a stage training. When among the objects of everyday life actors are apt to be hampered by a feeling of incongruity between the artifice of their action and the reality of their surroundings. This affects not only theatrical and stylised acting, but also the more casual acting peculiar to cinema. Even when shooting people in their ordinary movements, it is sometimes possible to get a more unified effect and a stronger feeling of reality by placing them on a set. One peculiar advantage, for example, is that on a set they seem to forget the camera more readily. But the director also benefits from working on a studio set. There he is independent of the chances of the outside world; free from the noises, interruptions and discomforts which ordinarily interfere with work on a real

location. He has a greater control over circumstances, and his mind is freer to concentrate on essentials. (When Sickert was asked why he never painted in the open air, he said that it was because he found it more difficult *to rule lines* out of doors).

The practical and technical advantages of using sets are, in fact, the advantages peculiar to the studio itself. It is built for making films. There is direct contact with administration, organization is easier, and there is centralization of staff and props. The actors have dressing-rooms which presumably give all the necessary facilities for making-up. There is everything to help the work of the sound engineer and the cameraman. And perhaps the most important factor of all is the complete command over light and, in particular, top and back lighting, which the organized arrangement of the artificial set affords. This last affects the control over the image, which is the essential of camera work; the power to detach it by nice degrees and if necessary isolate it from its surroundings. Back light thrown from above and behind the set is the most effective control possible to the cameraman. It can create infinite stages of relief and is fundamental to any development of photographic style.

Since there are so many reasons for employing sets and since cinema affords so many opportunities for learning from experience, it is surprising that of all the departments of film work the study of set building has been the most neglected. Except to follow vogues in decoration, sets have hardly changed in conception from their original primitive forms.

We are not considering how accurately sets may be got to imitate nature, nor are we considering how they can be used to create atmosphere. The essential problem is to see how sets may be considered and built from first to last for the development of a truly cinematic point of view.

The set builders whom most producers employ are old studio retainers who hold their job through custom rather than for any particular skill or developing knowledge in their work. When producers do cut adrift from such unimaginative labour they usually call in painters, architects, stage set designers or interior decorators. None of these men have a knowledge of the special factors governing cinema set building. They pass designs made in their own professional manner to some hack art director who in turn passes them on to carpenters without proper adaptation.

The art director should be as alive to the action of the film as the director himself. In his own field he should have as much initiative and scope. Just as it is the special job of the director to guide the dramatic course of the actors to the shape and style of the whole film, it is for the art director to use his own non-human material to the same end. And to do his work properly he must be fully

aware of all the possibilities of sets and lighting, so that he may exploit each of them to the full.

With regard to the set itself, the first law to be laid down is that it must be built to be lit. That is to say, you must never look upon a set as having an existence independent of the lighting which will reveal it. The set, not as it is, but as it will appear, is the thing. The films of Vidor, Dreyer and Chaplin are uncommon for their understanding of the first principles of set building. In Chaplin's *Woman of Paris* the excellence of the sets was due almost entirely to their full response to the lighting.

The failure of art directors to reckon enough with light has prevented them from adapting their ways of building sets to the changes which lighting has undergone as cinema has developed. The hard white arc lights and the mercury banks of the early cinema gave maximum contrast and hardness to the photography. With the coming of panchromatic film and wide-angle lenses a softer incandescent light is used which gives a much less defined image. This change should have been followed when necessary by a harder and more rigid construction of set. Instead, through lack of enterprise on the part of art directors, all sets now appear with a uniform and monotonous softness.

Similarly, in its lack of adaptation to the changes in camera technique, set-building lags behind. In the early cinema the set confronted the camera as a stage confronts its audience. The camera, stationary and at eye level (its only variants being a cut from long-shot to mid-shot, mid-shot to close-up), demanding a complete stage set with its three walls. Since that time the camera has lost its immobility. But nothing has been done in set building to exploit the possibilities of the modern camera with its new battery of pans and trucks.

Sets could be constructed which would give the camera far greater freedom of movement. But they cannot be, till art directors fully appreciate the camera point of view. The use of special angles should also be properly appreciated by art directors. They might then consider the possibility of making sets of floors and ceilings, with the back light coming in one case from above and the other from below. They still unfortunately hug the side walls only and are, to that extent, as firmly glued to stage tradition as the theatrical people themselves.

The question of scale is also important in set building. The relation of scale between parts of the same set must be considered, and, what is less obvious, the scale of one set as compared with another. It is a very common fault for exteriors to bear no relation to their corresponding interiors, particularly when interior sets are used in conjunction with real exteriors. Small house exteriors are fre-

quently given huge rooms; and over-sized settings which originated in an appeal to the snobbery of the audience, have become the monotonous rule. In practice the smaller sets have given the best results. Though they are more difficult for the technicians they are easier for the actors and for the directors. And they usually look more convincing. The use of wide-angle lenses can give them a depth and distortion: a quality of perspective, indeed, which is new and peculiar to cinema. As such it ought to be exploited. This deeper knowledge of lenses is of primary importance in the construction of sets, and one may say that no set should be designed without some understanding of the lenses used in the various shots. The size of the lens is as important as the placing of the subject.

Another point: the preoccupation with depth has obscured the fact that the projected image is inevitably a flat image. The emphasis is no longer on the volume, but on the line. In every composition, therefore, and every sequence of compositions, the play of lines is important. The dominant lines, straight or curved, vertical, horizontal or diagonal—have a dramatic and emotional significance which affects the montage and construction of a sequence. No art director can ignore it. The jumpiness and lack of rhythm in such otherwise finely staged sequences as the dancing scenes in *The Merry Widow* and *Gay Divorce* are due almost entirely to this confusion between set volume and projection line.

The problem is so complicated that one may well understand why the line of least resistance has so often been taken and why the old stage set, made rather for the eye of the director than for the lens of the camera, is still in general use. But the exciting possibilities of what we might call the camera set as distinct from the stage set must sooner or later be exploited by all intelligent directors.

EISENSTEIN

It is announced that Eisenstein is preparing a massive film to portray the history of a proletarian family in Moscow over a period of five hundred years. Since his Mexican misadventure, Eisenstein—who is the subject of the cover illustration—has confined his activities for the most part to lecturing at the State Kino Institute (G.I.K.), where his pupils, whose courses extend for three years, have included a number from countries outside the U.S.S.R. A note in the "Moscow News" observes that an important factor in Eisenstein's work has undoubtedly been the photography of Eduard Tissé, who is not a Russian but a Scandinavian. "A cameraman on various fronts during the World War, Tissé donned Red Army uniform and filmed the Civil War and Revolution on many fronts, under conditions of extreme danger and difficulty."

DEFINITIONS IN CINEMA

CLIFFORD LEECH

I FULLY appreciate David Schrire's insistence on exactitude of terminology,* for the two chief causes of confused thinking in criticism are the use of an inexact terminology and the incursion of political and religious prejudices into the domain of the critical intelligence. By all means let us clarify the meaning of "documentary," but Schrire is sailing under a full canvas from the rocks of vagueness which are Scylla into the Charybdis which is prejudice.

"If cinema is to mean anything it must serve a purpose beyond itself, have some justification other than its own very medium," says Schrire. This might be questioned, but let it pass. He continues: "If that is true, there is one purpose above all others that is of paramount importance to-day—that of making a living." And here assuredly I must part company with him. By all means let us make films of our distressed areas (it is well that our civilization should know the truth about its decayed teeth), but there are many things in life, both good and bad, which rival hunger in importance. The fear of death, the joy of mating, the conversation of friends, the glory of achievement, the tedium of routine, the quiet normal horror of egocentricity—all these are of as much importance in the life of every individual man or woman as the problem of how to eat and where to sleep. I see no reason why the term "documentary" should be restricted to the presentation of the most obvious of man's interests.

Schrire, inconsolable, admits that it is probably too late to exclude Flaherty's pictures from the documentary class. Then let us not attempt to establish artificial distinctions which have not been recognized in the past and cannot be recognized in the future. Instead, we may find it instructive to make a classification of documentary films according to their two basic features: the nature of the material and the approach to that material.

Here, then, are some definitions:

"A documentary film is one which sets out to convey an impression of a phase of contemporary reality." Perhaps the words "or past" should be added after "contemporary." I am in favour of widening the definition rather than narrowing it, but historical films have so far had little to do with reality. Categories other than documentary include the fantastic (*Caligari*, *Warning Shadows*, *The*

* "Evasive Documentary," *Cinema Quarterly*, Autumn, 1934.

Waltz Dream), the satiric (*A Nous la Liberte, Le Dernier Milliardaire*), and the stylised (Lubitsch). These classes might be profitably subdivided, but also clearly overlap.

"The term *theatrical*, in the vocabulary of the cinema, may be applied to all films which use trained actors and/or studio sets."

Similarly, "the term *naturalistic* describes films in which the actors are untrained and are merely directed to reproduce for the screen the way of life that is ordinarily their own, and in which the settings are not created for the purpose of the film."

"*Realistic*, as in literature, describes the approach of the director who concentrates on faithfully reproducing the surface-aspects of reality—who takes reality at its face-value."

"*Romantic*," similarly, "describes the approach of the director who believes that there are many facets of reality and that he may reproduce for us whichever of them he will." Consequently the romantic director generally shows more individuality of style than the realistic director, who should suppress his own personality in his attempt to catch the surface-truth. Moreover, let the warning be given; there will always be many who will deny the truth of a romantic's vision of reality. But deliberate falsification is neither realistic nor romantic.

We may now look for, and find, four classes of documentary:—

(1) Romantic theatrical.—Clair in *Sous les Toits* and *14 Juillet* is the most famous exponent of this type. I do not know whether Dovzhenko was using untrained actors in *Earth*; if not, that clearly romantic film should be included here.

(2) Realistic theatrical.—Here one could give many examples:—Bruno Rahn's *The Tragedy of the Street*, Roland Brown's *Quick Millions*, Pabst's *Westfront*.

(3) Romantic naturalistic.—Certainly we must place Flaherty here, and with him perhaps Eisenstein, who, as far as I have seen, has rarely tried to confine himself to the presentation of the one-planed external. A glance at the published scenario of *Que Viva Mexico!* should strengthen this view.

(4) Realistic naturalistic.—Here is the true, the "pure" documentary, which we find in Ruttmann's *Berlin* and *World Melody*, in Turin's *Turksib*, in Joris Ivens' *Radio*, and the rest of their kind. But is it so pure? Was Ruttmann's suicide incident in *Berlin* a slice of reality, and was the woman actually drowned? Did Turin's geometrical instruments actually, and normally, gyrate for the delight of the camera? There is, indeed, no hard and fast line of distinction between the ordering of existent material and the assembling of new material, and for that reason I have insisted on the "theatrical" classes of documentary. The purpose, as Schrire has it, is all. Pabst and Turin are together here, as perhaps are Clair and Eisenstein.

A NOVELIST LOOKS AT THE CINEMA

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON

PERHAPS, in the interests of truth and alliteration, this should read A Philistine looks at the Films.

As becomes a good Scots novelist, I live in a pleasant village near London; and, in the intervals of writing novels for a livelihood and writing history for pleasure, I attend of an evening the local cinema. It is popularly known as the bug house; the jest having long staled, there is no longer even a suggestion of vocal quotes around this insulting misnomer. For it is certainly a misnomer. The seats are comfortably padded, even for ninepence; a girl with trim ankles and intriguing curls comes round at intervals with a gleaming apparatus and sprays the air with sweet-smelling savours; the ash-trays are large and capacious; and it is amusing, in the intervals, to brood upon one's neighbours and consider the wild growth of hair which furs the necks of women who neglect the barber.

But at this point the Big Picture comes on. In the first hour we have witnessed two news reels; a speech by Signor Mussolini, simian and swarthy (why has Hollywood never offered him adequate inducements to understudy King Kong?); shots of a fire in a London factory, taken from the roof of a nearby building which was surely a public-house owned by a pressing philanthropist, so desperately poor is the photography and so completely moronic the camera-man in missing every good angle of vision; and No. CVII of Unusual Jobs, showing the day-to-day life of an Arizonan miner who has turned an empty gallery into a home for sick and ailing bats. Then has followed the Travelogue.

Travelogues in English bug houses (for I'll keep the homely misnomer) deal with only two portions of this wide and terrible planet of ours. We are never shown the Iguazu Falls or the heights of the Andes or the snows on Popocatepetl; or North Africa and the white blaze of sunlight across Ghizeh; or S. Sophia brooding over Constantinople; or Edinburgh clustered reeking about its hill; or London in summer; or the whores' quarters in Bombay; or the bleak and terrible tracks that were followed by the Alaskan treks of '98; or Mohenjo-Daro, the cradle of Indian civilization; or the Manger in Bethlehem at Christmas time, with the pilgrims swop-

ping diseases on the holy stones; or the pygmies of the Wambutti; or the Punak of Borneo, a quarter of a million of them, naked, cultureless, happy, the last folk of the Golden Age; or the dead cities of Northern England, cities of more dreadful night than that dreamt by Thomson; or. . . .

We are shown instead, wearily, unendingly, *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam*, the fishers of Iceland and the dancing-girls of Bali. A strange, unrecorded tabu has smitten the travelogue-makers; the rest of the earth, those two islands apart, is forbidden their observation. So, with faith and fortitude, twice a week, we sit in the bug house and watch Iceland—mostly female Iceland—grin upon us over the salted cadaver of the unlucky cod; we gaze upon unending close-ups of gigantic buttocks bent in arduous toil; we blink upon geysers and giggling Scandinavian virgins. . . . Or, in Bali, we watch the Devil Dance. The girls appear in masks; the novice film-fan deplores these masks till later he sees a group of the girls without them. Then he understands that even the devil has an æsthetic eye. . . .

Next, Mr. Laurel and Mr. Hardy have entertained us with a desperate vigour. They have sawn themselves in halves, fallen down chimneys, eaten gold-fish, married their sisters, committed arson, or slept in insect-infested beds. And gradually, whatever the pursuit, the grin has faded from our faces. We are filled with awareness of a terrible secret unknown to the lords of the films: that the dictum on art being long and life short was never intended for injudicious application to a single-reel comedy. . . . Mr. Hardy has discovered fleas in his bed. Excellent! We laugh. The flea has infested the skirts of the Comic Muse since the days of Akhnaton. But Mr. Hardy is still horrified or astounded. Yard upon yard of celluloid flicks past, and we await fresh developments. There are no fresh developments. The film, we realize, was made for the benefit of a weak-eyed cretin in whose skull a jest takes at least ten minutes to mature.

Then we have had Mickey Mouse . . . and remember Felix the Cat. Rose-flushed and warm from heaven's own heart he came, and might not bear the cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame, as Mr. Swinburne wrote. But some day, surely, he will return and slay for us this tyrant. How long, O Lord, how long?

But now the Big Picture is coming. First, a lion has growled convincingly or a radio tower has emitted sparks or a cockerel has crowed in a brazen I-will-deny-thee-thrice manner. The heraldic beasts disposed of, we come to the names of the producer, the scenario-writer, the costumier, the sound-effects man; we learn that Silas K. Guggenheimer made the beds, Mrs. Hunt O'Mara loaned the baby, and Henryk Sienkiewicz carried round drinks. The fact



From
Alexandrov's
"Jazz Comedy"
a Souyoskino
production



From
"Woman from the
Mountains,"
a new Russian film
directed by
Ertogrul Muksin

Courtesy of Marie Seton



From
"Three Songs
about Lenin"
directed by
Dziga Vertov

Courtesy of Marie Seton

that we here in the bug house care not a twopenny damn for any of these facts, that we never remember the names except as outrageous improbabilities in nomenclature, is unknown to Hollywood or Elstree. . . . It is bad enough to have the printer's name upon one's novels. But what if he printed page after page in front of the title, telling how Jim Smith set the type and Rassendyll Snooks read the proofs and Isobel Jeeves typed the correspondence, and the printer's boy who had belly-ache was treated with a stomach-pump in St. Thomas's?

Lists of actors and characters, confusing, and (a noted name or so apart) quite meaningless. Then, with tremolos, a distant view of New York—always the same view, film directors gallop madly round to each other's studios to borrow this shot. . . or a distant view of London; also, always the same view. Then—the picture. . . .

Like most intelligent people I prefer the cinema to the theatre. Stage drama has always been a bastard art, calling for acute faith from the audience to supplement its good works. The film suffers from no such limitations; it presents (as is the function of art) the free and undefiled illusion. A minor journalist and playwright of our time, St. John Ervine, denies this with some passion. His flat-footed prose style (relieved by a coruscation of angry corns) is employed week by week in a Sunday sheet to carry bulls of denunciation against the Whore of Hollywood. (Can it be that Hollywood has refused to film Mr. Ervine's works as—with a far greater ineptness—it has refused to film mine?) But Mr. Ervine's poor tired feet are needlessly outraged. The Whore has righteously our hearts—if only she would practise the courtesan to the full, not drape her lovely figure in the drab domestic reach-me-downs of stage drama.

Too often—in fifteen out of twenty of the Big Pictures that reach our bug house—she is clad not even in reach-me-downs. Instead, she is tarred and feathered or sprayed with saccharine in the likeness of a Christmas cake; and unendingly, instead of walking fearless and free, she sidles along with her hands disposed in a disgustingly Rubens-like gesture.

But—we had *Le Million*, and enjoyed its cackle; we had *Gabriel Over the White House*, the courtesan in dust-cap and mop, spring-cleaning her back-garden as even a Muse must do. We had *Man of Aran* which—apart from the fact that the characters never had any sleep and the sea suffered from elephantiasis, and every gesture and every action was repeated over and over again till one longed to go for the projector with a battle-axe—was a righteous film. And a month ago we had *As the Earth Turns*, which ought to be crowned in bay, in spite of some deplorable photography and an occasional sickly whiff of sugar-icing.

Between whiles our Big Picture is the Muse in tar and feathers.

JEAN VIGO

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI

JEAN VIGO came from the Basque country. His grandfather was an important official in the little state of Andorra, and his father was the famous Almereyda, one of those pre-war figures who have since become legendary.

Vigo inherited the strength and energy of these men. He belonged to the vigorous and care-free type of Pyrennean mountaineer. He had the sense of scale, the feeling for the contrast between great and small, which belongs to those who come from little isolated countries.

He also inherited the personal charm of his father, who, according to those who had known him, was one of the most charming men in the world. Like his father, Vigo had a great many friends. Although very reserved, he once confided to one of them that he had taken his first infant steps in a prison during the Great War. In this prison his father was "suicided." From this grim childhood Vigo carried with him for the rest of his life a bitterness which was to dominate all his work.

Now at the age of twenty-nine he is dead.

He started his career in a photographer's studio, and later became an assistant camera-man. Then he founded a film society at Nice, and did his first work as a director in *A Propos de Nice*, which he qualified with the phrase *point de vue documenté*. After coming to Paris he first made *Taris the Swimmig Champion*, and next went on to write a script for a more ambitious film on tennis with H. Cochet; but the difficulties which surrounded young French directors forced him to abandon this. It was then that he set to work on what is perhaps his most complete film, *Zéro de Conduite* (*Nought for Behaviour*).

The Paris Censors considered this film to be an outrage against the educational institutions of the nation, and, declaring it to be harmful to children as well as to the good name of the Schools of France, forbade its exhibition in public. A Press show followed in which the film aroused open hostility.

The bourgeois sentiments of the audience were deeply shocked by the behaviour of the children as shown by Vigo. During the projection the house-lights had to be switched on several times, and the show ended almost in a free fight. In Paris, highbrow audiences have the courage of their convictions.

Zéro de Conduite is the only film about children in which no com-

promise of any kind is made with the sentimentality of the so-called commercial cinema. Vigo had courage to show children as seen by themselves, and better still, grown-ups as seen by children.

The majority of the English critics who saw this film at the Film Society completely misunderstood it and took it for a comedy. The poetry which runs through the film escaped them, as did the truth of the presentation of children in their relations to one another. *Zéro de Conduite* had the spirit of revolt and the harsh satirical outlook which is common to all sur-realist work. For although the sur-realist leaders in France never recognized Vigo as one of the "pure of heart," nevertheless, the scenes in the headmaster's study, those of the afternoon walk and of the dormitory can be quoted as perfect examples of sur-realism, just as a poem by Eluard or a painting by Max Ernst, and better, perhaps, than the films of Bunuel.

After *Zéro de Conduite*, Vigo prepared a whole series of scripts and worked out all kinds of financial schemes; a film with Blaise Cendrars, another with G. de la Fouchardière, whose *La Chienne* had impressed all of us, as well as a film on the convict settlements with Dieudonné.

Delays and disappointments could not discourage him; he stuck to his work. At last he managed to get the production of *L'Atalante* moving. It was an important film, and Vigo might have imagined that he had passed the period of his worst difficulties.

The work of the film is conceived and carried out with the greatest enthusiasm. The Hungarian actress, Dita Parlo, who had worked for Pommer, the great French comedian, Michel Simon, Dasté of the *Compagnie des Quinze*, who had played already in *Zéro de Conduite*, and Gilles Margaritis, also from *Les Quinze*, whose work was to be a revelation, form the cast. The music is composed by Maurice Jaubert. The subject is vast and simple. Kauffman's camera work is superb. So *L'Atalante* has every chance of success.

The film is finished. Vigo falls seriously ill. Everyone round him knows that he is doomed. His wife and his friends do all they can to lighten his sufferings. Meanwhile, *L'Atalante* is put into the hands of the distributors. The sur-realism of its story with a barge for a hero against a severe background of canals frightens the trade and it insists on making a box-office version.

A theme song is added of which the title is self-explanatory, "*Les Chalands Qui Passent*." This title becomes the title of the film, and as a final insult, close-ups of a popular music-hall artiste are superimposed more or less throughout. The mutilation of his work is a torture to Vigo during the last weeks of his illness.

Such was the life of one of the most gifted of young French directors. He could have made great films. He possessed enormous powers not only of imagination, but also of action. And above all, he had

the gift of finding a true poetry in the world of the camera. This poetry of reality was his contribution, and it is the chief justification for films to-day. With the French film industry in its present state his loss is a serious blow. In the French studios such men as he are rare.

From a child in prison with his father, Jean Vigo developed into a man greatly in revolt against the injustices of his generation. Harassed ceaselessly by the Censors and the trade, he personifies the progressive film director in his fight against the stupidity and hypocrisy of the ordinary cinema-world.

CHAPLIN'S NEW FILM

MACK SCHWAB

WHILE Hollywood contemplates deserting black-and-white films for Technicolour, and continues to stuff its productions with dialogue, Charlie Chaplin slowly creates his second non-talkie picture since the advent of sound.

Untitled as yet, his movie is being shot silent. Music and perhaps rhythmical dialogue similar to the opening shot in *City Lights* will be dubbed in afterwards. The story has an industrial background, and concerns a tramp, who gets a job in a factory, becomes enmeshed in the machinery, falls in love with a girl, only to have her leave him in the end. Familiar Chaplin stuff. It should be ready for release in the spring.

I was on the set during a prison sequence. Chaplin gets there through a gag appropriate to the present day. He saw a red flag drop off the back end of a lumber truck. He picked it up, and waving it, called the driver to stop. A police riot squad with tear gas and clubs mistook him for a Communist inciting revolution, and clapped him in jail. Chaplin likes the easy life of jail so much that he refuses to aid a prison break—in fact he succeeds in spoiling the prisoner's escape.

It is very exciting watching Chaplin rehearse. The scene is slapstick, with guards and some prisoners (one of whom is a hard-boiled



From the
factory sequence
in Chaplin's
new film



Chaplin
on the set
during production
of his third
and as yet
untitled
sound-film



From "Il Canale Degli Angeli," a Venezia-Film Production directed by Francesco Pasinetti from a scenario by P. M. Pasinetti



giant whose hobby consists incongruously in composing delicate needlework). Chaplin acts out the movement of each character, plays his own part and then the parts of those who come in contact with him. Over and over for hours the action is rehearsed. There is talk, but the sense is clear in the pantomime. Chaplin himself speaks only occasional monosyllables. Quietly, patiently, he moulds the scene into a rhythmical whole. Cues, pauses, steps, gestures are exactly learned. "Wait until he's crossed over to there. Then you come here. No, stall until the cue. That's it. Now we'll try it again," he says with a soft mellow good-humoured voice. Again, and again, and again. Chaplin worries over a movement, considers, paces out steps. Gags are improvised. Chaplin hands the giant his embroidery as the latter is led off by the guards. The material at hand is made use of. Chaplin starts to lean against the bars, only his hand passes through, and he stumbles. The prison door is used to knock out a few of the prisoners.

While Chaplin plans out the action, he senses the place and time for the close-ups. He shoots a long key-shot, and breaks it up into close-ups for emphasis. His script is completely worked out, key-shot by key-shot.

Finally he is ready to see the effect he has worked out. His assistant director acts as his stand-in, and takes his place in the action. Chaplin watches through the camera. An amusing contrast, his assistant is plump middle-aged, with glasses. Chaplin laughs at one of the gags. "That's good!" he says about a comical chorus of hands reaching through the bars at his assistant who holds a revolver. Corrections are made. He is satisfied. He asked for a glass of water and a cigarette. Pause after the long strenuous rehearsal. The huge prisoner is dripping with sweat. Some one leans over and offers advice. Chaplin thinks the suggestion good, and incorporates it.

"Now, boys, we're going to take it," Chaplin says. You can hear the camera motor, as you can't of course in sound movies. A revolver, which must be thrown to a certain spot, does not reach it. Cut. The revolver fails again. Once more. The whole action is run through. Chaplin is not satisfied. Five times. Finally it is done.

Chaplin shoots from five to twenty-five takes for every one used. In *City Lights* three hundred thousand feet of film were shot for the seventy-five hundred on the screen. Chaplin does his own cutting. Literally, he cuts it piece by piece in the cutting room. Last Sunday he was cutting and splicing all day.

He composes his own musical score. In fact, he does everything. Most of his co-workers have been with him since he began making independent pictures.

There is only one Chaplin in Hollywood.

THE FILM ABROAD

THE AMERICAN YEAR

KIRK BOND

As I write, at the end of the year, the lists of "ten-bests" are being drawn up and will shortly appear in the papers. They promise to include some excellent pictures. *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The House of Rothschild*, *One Night of Love*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Judge Priest*, *What Every Woman Knows*, *Viva Villa*—these will be found in most lists. Most lists, on the other hand, will not include *Blood Money*, *Fog over 'Frisco*, *Dubarry*, or *The Firebird*, a quartet which, with the somewhat more eligible *Crime Without Passion*, possibly comprehends the best filmic work done in America this year. There are, of course, *Cleopatra*, an admirable antique; *The Scarlet Empress*, an imitation of Gance on a drunk; *Our Daily Bread*,* cruelly exposing the limitations of Vidor; and *The Merry Widow*, Lubitschean only in the title; as well as Milestone's pot-boiler *The Captain Hates the Sea*, and the usual cartoons. But it would be difficult to find five other films which contain as much good material as the quintet I have mentioned.

Some, who will admit the merits of Brown and the Hecht-MacArthur-Garmes combination, may wonder at the other three. Yet I doubt if, save Brown, there is another director in America with the creative ability of William Dieterle. In the old days he was a UFA star. He played the Poet in *Waxworks*, and Valentine in *Faust*. In Hollywood he began on foreign language versions, turned to original productions, and achieved his first success in *The Last Flight*, some three years ago. The following year he produced *Six Hours to Live*. In both films he added to an admirable sense of continuity an extraordinary atmosphere of ghostly horror and madness. It was like nothing that had ever been done before. The terror of lunacy that lurked in the one, the eerie unreality of the other, were terribly real, not simply fantastic effects. If there was a likeness, it was to Stroheim. Behind both lay the same curious and frightening sense of spiritual confusion, the same desperation of a man lost in a wilderness. Dieterle was yet some way behind the director of *Greed*, but the similarity was apparent.

Last year, for his one important film, Dieterle completely forgot the deep issues of the two earlier pictures, and produced the utterly charming *Adorable*, all cake-icing and Dresden china, and one of the finest things of its kind since *Cinderella* and *A Waltz Dream*.

This year he has made nothing of lasting importance, but each

* Known in Britain as *The Miracle of Life* . . . Ed.

picture has had good things in it that make it filmicly more interesting than many films more entertaining and more satisfying in the round. *Fog over 'Frisco* was particularly distinguished by its breathless speed and constant movement. It is the fastest film-drama I know. Of the two pictures of the fall and early winter, *Madame du Barry* (as we are asked to call it) is the more enjoyable. I know it will not make the lists, and yet I can hardly see why. Probably because it is "smart" or "flippant"; for the standard of American film-critics is unbelievably high, too high to be true. One could write a small book about their point of view. They, the critics, were unanimous in praise of the eminently respectable *Berkeley Square*, because it was what *they* thought *educated people* thought was genuine "eighteenth century." *Dubarry*, on the other hand, is not, yet to me it is the best eighteenth century I remember since Leni's *Man who Laughed*, and only inferior to the first *Dubarry*.

It is just lively enough to be convincing. There is no obvious effort to go back two hundred years. One is simply there, and not bothered by a specious solemnity or an equally specious hilarity injected for the sake of "atmosphere," both of which helped to spoil *Jew Suss*. Reginald Owen's "After me, the deluge," is that miracle of speeches, an historic remark that actually sounds true. And if Dolores del Rio is no one's idea of the favourite, she is yet a very satisfactory baggage, and a plausible *Dubarry*. The only objection one might have is that the continuity is too fast for a leisurely age. Yet even this suits well with the intricate imbroglio which provides the plot, and is evidently meant to be enjoyed rather than understood.

The Firebird is not such a good picture. It is, for the most part, smooth but undistinguished. Dieterle introduces, however, in the little fellow, who could not say whether he had heard a gun-shot (for "A gun-shot! Ho! A gun-shot is soon over—bang—like that, but this terrible noise all day, hammering, people shouting, policemen . . ."), a relative of the mad aviators in *The Last Flight* and the trembling secretary in *Six Hours*, and the shot of his banging on the door, seen beyond an enormous stuffed pelican which fills half the screen and nods at each attack, is one to be remembered. It is so frantic, so desperate, yet so helpless.

Is it fanciful to see in this chaos of Stroheim and now Dieterle something of more than individual importance, something fundamentally American? Is it a coincidence that the close of *Greed* is essentially the close of *Moby Dick*? or that the at times symbolic unreality of *Six Hours* echoes Hawthorne? These are deep questions, but they do not seem wholly unjustified. However, they cannot be answered here. For the present, it is enough to express the hope that we shall see still finer Dieterles.

ACTIVITY IN GERMANY

GERMAN education authorities have decided to introduce the cinema as a means of instruction wherever films can speak more impressively to the learning child than any other medium. For the thorough organization of this new method of teaching a special government bureau has been created. This *Reichs-Stelle für den Unterrichtsfilm* will supply some 60,000 schools with 16 mm. projectors. The production of the necessary films will be entrusted to suitable directors under the supervision of an expert teacher. The films will be chiefly silent and will be supplied to schools accompanied by a textbook containing explanations, short lectures, literature and other material for the teacher. Every school child throughout Germany will contribute 20 pfennigs towards the realization of this plan.

Another educational film organization just formed is the *Reichsvereinigung Deutscher Lichtspiel-Stellen*, which aims to develop the cinema as a means of cultural and instructional entertainment. Affiliated to it are over 3000 other bodies, such as educational associations, scientific organizations, cultural societies, sporting clubs, religious film societies. Attached is a profit-sharing renting organization and an information bureau which advises societies regarding programmes, etc. Foreign as well as German films of worth are given support. *Man of Arran* and *Palo's Bridal Trip* (Danish) have already drawn record attendances. Besides the erection and operation of special educational cinemas in the principal German cities, the cultivation of the full-length feature educational film is one of the main objects of this new organization.

Among forthcoming films planned by Ufa is still another version of the life and death of Joan of Arc, whose part will be played by Angela Salokker of the Munich State Theatre. A musical film on the youth of Johan Sebastian Bach is to be produced for the 250th anniversary of his birth. Another German composer, Weber, will figure in a new Cicero film, *Invitation to the Dance*. The central figure in another film will be Oliver Cromwell, under whose iron rule England had an early experience of dictatorship.

Emil Jannings, who has recently returned after an absence of several years, has just finished a Deka film, *The Old and the Young King*, dealing with the conflict between Frederic the Great and his father. Europe Films has announced the production of a film founded on the life of Rembrandt.

One of the most important events of the present season was the premiere of the Bavaria-Tofa production, *Peer Gynt*, at the Berlin Capitol. Hans Albers plays the principal part. The direction is by Dr. Wendhausen and the photography by Carl Hoffman.

MISCELLANY

I.C.E.—A REPLY TO G. F. NOXON

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

IF it is true that the film, like other things in this world, needs an international court of appeal, whose intervention conciliates the clash of interests and national egotisms, and which applies to every new production in the sphere of the film an assessment of value uncoloured by self-love and the patriotic pride of the country of origin, then G. F. Noxon has done the film, and thereby all of us, an ill turn. He declared, in the last number of *Cinema Quarterly*, that the International Institute of Educational Cinematography in Rome, the sole international institution concerned with films existing at the present day, is of absolutely no use, not even for Fascist propaganda, which at Mussolini's behest and under cover of the League of Nations, it is supposed to carry on. In short, it is a sheer waste of money.

Noxon is trying by this means to undermine the moral support, which is as necessary as the financial, to an institute of this kind. Therefore the readers of *Cinema Quarterly* may be willing to permit one whom they know as a friend of the art of cinema, and who has had an opportunity to form his own opinion about the matter under dispute, to present a short statement of the position.

What work is the Institute doing? It has made a comprehensive collection of books and periodicals; it has promoted a number of congresses, among them the International Congress of Educational Films last April, at which forty countries were represented; it organized the International Exhibition of Film Art in August 1934 in Venice; it has published twenty-one pamphlets in five languages, and it issues a monthly magazine and a bulletin, *Les Nouvelles Cinématographiques*. But it is not on all these things that I wish to lay stress, since their significance depends obviously on whether they are well or badly done, and on that point everyone can form his own opinion. I wish rather to emphasize three aspects of the work of the Institute, as to whose value there can, in my opinion, be no dispute.

After working for four years, the Institute has achieved a customs agreement whereby all films, recognized by the Institute as having educational value, may be sent from one country to another free of customs duty. This agreement has, so far, been signed by twenty-five countries, including France, Italy, America and Great Britain;

it has been ratified, so far, by six countries.

At the Baden-Baden and Stresa conferences, in May and June 1934, the Institute brought about a standardization of the sub-standard film. The new norm under the title "Standard I.C.E." has been accepted, up to now, by the British (*sic*), French, German and Italian film industries. The consent of the Americans is to be expected.

In collaboration with outstanding experts in all countries, the Institute has collected the material for the "Film Encyclopædia," which will make available, in three large volumes, a detailed account of the technical development, art, history, economics, politics and legislation of the film. Only by brief indications can I suggest here what a unique aid will thus be placed at the disposal of all those interested in films. The "Encyclopædia" covers forty-five subjects, each of which is further divided into a number of sub-headings. Here are a few of these topics, chosen at random: history (æsthetic, economic, technical); the film in various countries; styles; types of material; the documentary film; the scientific film; the educational film; film production; the shooting of films; apparatus for filming; the moving camera; position; lighting; photography; film architecture; film manuscript; acoustics; uncut films; development and copying; montage; renting; the cinema theatre; projection; legislation; the state; the public; social aspects; film amateurs, film societies; the cinema press; directors; producers; actors. . . . The completed work is to contain about three thousand headings in alphabetical order; some of them occupy only about five lines, others equal a substantial volume in themselves. The section on "Film tricks," for example, contains the description of 110 tricks under as many sub-headings. Of the more exhaustive articles one may mention: The History of the Film (Earl Theisen of the Hollywood Film Museum), The Technique of Film Photography (Guido Seeber), The Chemistry of the Film and Electro-acoustics (the scientific experts of "Agfa" and "Telefunken"), The Art of Make-up (Max Factor), Film Architecture (Erno Metzner and Hermann Warin), The Silent Film, The German Film (Andor Kraszna-Kraus), The European Film (Paul Rotha). If I may be permitted a personal allusion, the headings of the section "Æsthetics" which I myself wrote, including such topics as: the sound film, montage, lighting, movement, the colour film, the film author, would, if put together, form a larger volume than my book on "Film." And I am by no means the only contributor to the æsthetic section of the "Encyclopædia"!

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to the fact that the journal of the Institute has been appearing since 1st January 1935 under the title "Intercine," in an entirely new form. It goes beyond the narrow limits of the educational film to furnish a monthly survey

of everything new that has been done and written in the sphere of the art, technical achievement, economics and politics of the film.

Noxon calls the Institute a piece of machinery for Italian propaganda. I have been working for over a year in the Institute. I am a foreigner and believe myself unbiased. In all cases I have been in a position to observe that it was Luciano de Feo's endeavour to secure the collaboration of outstanding men in all countries and to make use of the material supplied by them in the true spirit of international objectivity. Why, in spite of all this, should the Italian Government find it to its interest to subsidize the Institute? Well, in my opinion, because it would enhance Italy's prestige if so important a factor in modern life as the film had its international headquarters in Rome. Rome is anxious to become again what it once was. Is this explanation adequate?

CAMERA MOVEMENT

THE first essential of a moving-picture is necessarily movement. This has two aspects: an objective, that is to say in the material surveyed; and a subjective, that is to say in the eye of the camera. The purpose of the latter may be said to be the active interpretation of the former—working in such a way as to bring out by selection and emphasis special points of detail or of subjective mood.

No film, it is clear, can be made without an intimate interplay of the two elements; but it is also true that it is the second which chiefly distinguishes the film from other dramatic forms; and it is therefore with this that we are here concerned.

Subjective movement in a film has two alternative renderings. It is possible for us actually to follow the progress of the camera from point to point; or we may cut out the intervening stages and concern ourselves only with the points of rest. This latter method, in the use of which movement is achieved by the flashing from one stationary set-up to another, and which leaves everything to the cutter, is that favoured by such Russian directors as Pudovkin and Eisenstein.

The common usage of the Russians, to whom moving-camera shots are anathema, is completely opposed to that prevalent in the Western cinema. Here and in America, every other shot taken is a moving-shot; and at the same time the potentialities of constructive editing are to a great extent simply ignored. Somewhere between the two extremes come the better of the Continental directors: Clair, Pabst, and, if we may include him among the Continentals, Lubitsch.

Since the Russians have earned for themselves the reputation of knowing more about cinema than any others of our time, it will repay us to consider their reasons, theoretical and otherwise, for neglecting a method which, it would seem, has nothing but a positive enlargement of scope to offer us; which, indeed, to all appearances, contains something absolutely vital to the film.

Pudovkin, in his book, *Film Technique*, says: "When we wish to apprehend anything, we always begin with the general outlines, and then, by intensifying our examination to the highest degree, enrich the apprehension by an ever-increasing number of details." Proceeding from this, he goes on to explain how in the film we have to eliminate the effort involved in the normal advance from general to particular, and aim always directly at the emphatic point. This he refers to as an "elimination of the points of interval."

But such an account of the processes of apprehension and conscious observation is surely only partially valid. Perception, even when it apprehends detail, apprehends it against a background: the latter only penetrates to a minor degree, perhaps, but it is definitely there. It is this fact that the hammer-emphasis of the perpetual cross-cut close-up denies; and that the technique of the moving-camera, linking up point to point and giving us in the transition background as well as detail, reaffirms.

We are given to understand that the moving-camera shot is rejected because it tends too much to remind the spectator of the camera's presence. In actual fact, however, it only does so when abused (as, unhappily, it so often is); and in any case the argument is a weak one, for does not a procession of ingeniously strung-together close-ups equally recall to the spectator the omnipresent hand of the editor? Either way, thorough-going naturalism is defeated. Such naturalism, constantly pursued by certain of the Russians though it be, is a Jack-A-Lantern which can never be captured.

The camera must make its own pattern, as Pudovkin has said. The only thing is, that unless we intend to deal with pure abstractions we must still retain the impression and a good deal of the form of recognizable reality. That is why I press the claims of the moving camera, and assert that the eternal unvaried stationary close-shot inevitably degrades itself, becomes bewildering and meaningless. Over-emphasis is as bad a fault as under-emphasis. The particular becomes significant only when thrown up in relief against the general, the relatively unimportant.

Practical objections to the moving camera are of a different type. They are based mainly on the great expense of the preparations frequently required; and also no doubt partly on the marked misuse to which the method is subject in the West.



Above—Annabella in "Marie," a Hungarian film directed by Paul Fejos

Below—One of the lavish sets in "The Dictator," a forthcoming Toeplitz Production directed by Victor Saville, with Madeleine Carroll and Clive Brook in the cast





Elisabeth Bergner in "Escape Me Never,"
a new British and Dominions film directed
by Paul Czinner

On the whole, I regard moving-camera shots and constructive cutting as inseparable for a completed effect. The ideal is an alternation according to a previously-elaborated scheme of moving and static shots, the one or other predominating with the trend of mood and intention. In this connexion it is to be noted that the camera should hardly ever cease to move *in the middle of a shot*. It has the effect of a retardation, a throwing-back of the spectator into his seat: it does what the Russians deplore, reminds us of the camera. The only correct way to bring a camera-movement to an end is to cut the whole shot against a static shot from a different position.

A. VESSELO.

MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL

COMMENCING on 20th February there will be held in Moscow a Film Festival at which a series of the most recent Russian sound-films will be exhibited, together with a selected number of European and American productions. Facilities will be offered for a study of the development of the Russian cinema during the past fifteen years, and special travel arrangements have been made by Intourist Ltd., who will grant a reduction of fifty per cent. on their ordinary fares to visitors attending the Festival. There will also be a reduction on the cost of accommodation in Russia.

The Russian films to be exhibited will include *The Youth of Maxim* (Kostintseff and Trauberg), *Peasants* (Ermler), *Hot Days* (Sarchy and Henifer), *New Gulliver* (Ptushko), *The Private Life of Peter Vinogradoff* (Macheret), *Love and Hate* (Gendelstein), *Komsomol* (Ivens) and several Meshrabpom colour shorts.

BOOKS

MAN OF ARAN. By Pat Mullen. (London: Faber, 8s. 6d.)

"Man of Aran" is an excellent tale and to some extent a good record of film production. Pat Mullen gives Maggie, Mike and King their share of fineness and bravery. Mr. and Mrs. Flaherty are portrayed as grand people, but Pat fails to express Flaherty's importance to this particular film and to films as a whole. To appreciate this importance, the difference between Flaherty and a studio director must be understood. On ninety-five per cent. of the films made in studios the director is not an essential. He is merely a financier's mouthpiece. Flaherty's importance to a production and to the development of films can be judged by the history of *Nanook*. Flaherty landed twenty years ago in a frozen country. His equipment, compared to modern stuff, was crude. He had a wooden Bell Howell—

the thirtieth made. In three months with the help of two Eskimos he had built a lab. and cutting room. His water was got from an ice hole and carried in gasoline barrels on dog sledges. He printed with reflected sunlight and turned his acetylene projector by hand. Eighteen months later Flaherty was thawing out in New York with the first documentary ever made. Very few critics of the time realized the size and importance of the foundation Flaherty had laid. Very few do to-day.

Pat Mullen does not pretend to criticize. He realizes that Flaherty is a great man and wisely does not pass judgment.

JOHN TAYLOR.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII. Story and Dialogue by Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. (London: Methuen, 3s. 6d.)

At last a complete scenario has been published in book form. While admitting the excellence of the precedent, however, one must admit that there is little of technical interest in this little volume. It may be supposed that the editing by Ernest Betts has resulted in considerable simplification of the actual working script. Descriptions of scenes and technical terms are cut down to a minimum and printed in small italics (like stage-directions in a play) leaving the dialogue as the reader's main interest. Even under these conditions, however, some significant facts emerge. There are 239 scenes in the film, as compared with about 2000 in such films as *Jeanne Ney* and *Storm over Asia*. Of these, seventy-six are silent. Most of these are unimportant detail shots. Of the remaining 163 scenes, by far the greater number have no interest apart from the dialogue. These figures give some idea of the extent to which the ear has encroached on the province of the eye. Most of the methods by which the 'genuine' film gets its effects are here necessarily excluded. One cannot do quick-cutting with an average scene-length of twenty seconds, and if there is no quick-cutting, slow-cutting is meaningless. The relations between scenes are of the most straightforward type imaginable: effects of juxtaposition are naturally absent. The one faint-hearted attempt at a crescendo climax is considered mostly in terms of sound. The scenario, says Ernest Betts in his introduction, "reads very like a play."

G. F. DALTON.

THE STREET OF SHADOWS. By Elizabeth Coxhead. (London: Cassell, 7s. 6d.) A novel of the film trade in Wardour Street and of the studios in Germany at the end of the silent era and the coming of sound. Some of the characters are well-known personalities—directors, actors and critics—but thinly disguised; others are synthetic figures with certain clearly recognizable traits belonging to more than one notable character in the industry. An interesting and at times amusing, if never deeply illuminating, volume.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

SPIRIT OF EXPERIMENT

FORSYTH HARDY

THREE FILMS emerge from the quarter's cinema: because they are experiments and because, without experiment, no art can make progress. Under commercial conditions, experiment is expensive and hazardous, and seldom undertaken, even when the necessary imaginative ability is present; thus experiment is found most often in work not inspired only by a desire to amass profit—in the products of State-aided film units and in pictures made independently as mediums of personal expression.

The G.P.O. Film Unit has followed *Pett and Pott* and *Weather Forecast* with a more elaborate experiment in the expressive combination of visual and aural images—*The Song of Ceylon*. The direction is by Basil Wright, and in shaping the material he worked in close co-operation with Walter Leigh, Grierson and Cavalcanti. The special achievement of the film is its complete breakaway from the conventional narrative form and the substitution of a form of construction in which sound plays an essential part. If this non-visual continuity is not sympathetically appreciated, the film may well appear, as Charles Davy suggests, "meandering instead of marching." So unconventional is the form of the film that its peculiar quality is not immediately apparent. Few experiments in art are completely assimilated at the first contact, though it is the exception for a film to be, because of its subtlety, incapable of instant understanding.

A second experiment of the quarter is *The Idea*, by Berthold Bartosch, based on a book of wood-cuts by Frans Masereel. This, an attempt to use the cartoon form with a serious purpose, is probably the result of an independent artist's desire to obtain complete and continuous control over the film as a medium of expression—the sort of control he cannot have under studio conditions. The theme of the film is the birth of an idea and its reception by, and effect on, society, and the action is represented by two-dimensional figures against backgrounds at different levels which give depth to the scenes. The film does not attempt to define the idea, contenting itself with illustrating its reception; but its success in this limited achievement suggests that the cartoon form is capable of adaptation to a serious purpose, and that the conventional film form is not the only one available for the artist with something to say.

The third film which seems to have the spirit of experiment is *Men and Jobs*, one of the new Soviet importations. The title indicates one of the film's departures from convention, judged from the standards of the Western cinema, where it is exceptional to find themes concerned primarily with man and his work. But the film further reveals that the Soviet directors are fully conscious of the expressive possibilities inherent in the sound-strip. More often than not sound is used as a comic commentary, naturally and without affectation. For example, when a schoolroom is made of a workers' train, the engine, unseen, is heard puffing and groaning appropriate comment while an engineer-pupil faced with a knotty problem in elucidation fumbles and flounders. The sequence on the train is the most effective piece of sound-film craftsmanship in a picture whose technical quality, though often high, is not sustained. Its evidence of enterprise gives the film a refreshing vigour seldom found in the stereotyped product of the Western studios.

In the commercial cinema there is at present a tendency to avoid reality and to escape into the colour and romance of the past. Turn over any production schedule and you will not find a single film that faces up to a modern problem, though there will be many that invite us to take comfort in a flattering restatement of the achievements of our ancestors. Even the war films can no longer be said to be of this generation. *Forgotten Men* eloquently displays the horrors of war, but, of contemporary reference, says nothing more constructive than "Never again!" If it is true, as Philip Lindsay has suggested, that these romantic historical films mirror the mood of our generation, then our generation cannot want at the cinema "films which keep our world before us." It is easier, of course, to turn to the past than to look at the present. It is easier to search out a romantic story from the history books than to select the essential story of to-day and bring it to the screen.

CONTINENTAL IMPORTS

THE importation of continental films has shown a seasonal increase this quarter. Although no film with the possible exception of Clair's *Le Dernier Milliardaire* which, together with *Marie* and *Les Misérables*, is reviewed elsewhere, has produced any startling technical innovations, the general standard has been unusually high.

The most interesting film of those under review here is *Remous*. It is directed by Edmond Greville, an Englishman who played the part of Louis in *Sous les Toits de Paris*, and has acted as assistant to Clair. This is his first essay as a full-blown director of commercial films. The cardinal virtue of *Remous* is its refreshing sparsity of



Above—Vasa Jalovec as Paul in the Czecho-Slovakian film "Reka" (Young Love)

Below—From "Le Dernier Milliardaire," René Clair's satire on financiers and dictators



From "The Scarlet Pimpernel," Alexander Korda's latest London Film Production, adapted from the novel by Baroness Orczy. Leslie Howard takes the part of Sir Percy



dialogue. This in a French film would seem to be an example of heroic restraint, but here the restraint is not merely heroic. It is intelligent and apt. The theme—that of a husband physically incapacitated by a motor accident on his honeymoon—invites the use of symbolism, and symbolism is very deftly introduced. The film opens well with a clever suggestion of travel, and is continuously interesting to the end. Look out in particular for the admirably handled cabaret scene. As a whole the film lacks the consistent grip of *Crime Without Passion*, and is rather untidy in its tempo. A little tightening up in this respect would have made it a first-class film. Greville has made an auspicious debut, and is a director to be watched.

Refugees proves that, despite the exodus of so much talent from the German studios, the UFA company can still produce an entirely admirable film. Certain aspects of the film may be unpopular—the remarkable resemblance of the hero (Hans Albers) to Captain Goering, propaganda for the Nazi regime, and satire on the League of Nations—but there is no doubt about the quality of the film as a film. It bears the stamp of the German cinema at its best. The direction is by Gustav Ucicky, who directed *Morgenrot*, and the camera work is by Fritz Arno Wagner, who photographed many of Pabst's films, notably *The Loves of Jeanne Ney*.

From Czecho-Slovakia we have had *Reka*. This is a simple, wholly charming film, told deliberately, with a wealth of beautifully photographed scenery. It is a typical example of the sort of film we are now getting from the Continent—good, pleasant entertainment, with no particular aspect outstanding. It poses no special problem, introduces no significant devices in the way of sound, photography, direction or general treatment. But it is all very agreeable and has not the blatancy of the average Hollywood production, or the nullity of the average British production.

The eagerly awaited *Maskerade* has been presented at the Academy. Reports state that it has been a great success on the Continent, particularly in Paris and Berlin. It will deservedly repeat that success in England wherever foreign films are shown. Outwardly it is just another frivolous story of amorous intrigue in a Viennese theatrical-military-artistic setting. A lively lady is sketched clothed solely in a mask and a muff. The sketch is accidentally published, and complications follow. In the middle of the film the artist is shot, and thereafter the characters, previously stereotyped, become flesh and blood people, excellently observed. The film, moving in another dramatic plane, loses none of its essential charm, and proceeds smoothly to an appropriate ending. Perhaps the most attractive thing about the film is that, although it has a light, superficial story, the people in it are, on the whole, surprisingly real. Paula

Wessely, a Viennese stage actress, gives a remarkable performance, very cleverly conveying a real depth of character while overtly playing a precisely opposite part. Olga Tschechowa, who was in *The Student of Prague*, gives a beautifully controlled performance. Willy Forst, who was responsible for the foreign version of *Unfinished Symphony*, has made a very smooth job of the direction. There is some delightful music, and the atmosphere and settings are both realistic and impressive.

The Rialto announced a season of continental films and began with *Jeanne*, directed by Tourjansky. This was scarcely an auspicious beginning. The story, which is sincerely told, is about a girl who falls in love with a rather aimless young man whose mother wishes him to marry money. In order to save him from disgrace she undergoes an illegal operation and her child dies. Eventually they marry. The greater part of the film is set in the 'eighties, but it is entirely ruined by an absurd epilogue set in 1934 in which the couple, now elderly, having adopted a daughter, bemoan the fact that their own child (who would have been called Jeanne) died. There is a lot of dialogue, very well translated by means of superimposed titles, and it is excellently acted. Gaby Morlay plays the part of the girl, and her performance should be seen.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

MEN AND JOBS

WITH *Men and Jobs* we have light in the East again. The Russian directors, after a long period of what they would call, no doubt, ideological difficulties, have found material and issues of material which they can warm up as effectively as they did the material and issues of the Civil War. *Men and Jobs* is about workers and, peculiarly for a Russian film, about workers who find their heroism in work. In the great period of *Petersburg* and *Potemkin* they found it in war. The melodramatic excitement of blood and battle prompted and formed the bludgeoning power of their cinema.

Peace-time preoccupations followed inevitably. They were more sober. They, too, involved struggles—but with illiteracy, lack of skill, lack of organization. They involved, for the first time, a certain observation of people and affection for them. The Russian cinema, with its old epileptic technique, wilted visibly. The directors could not interpret, and the technique could not handle, the new situation. Experiment, even failure, were necessary. *Men and Jobs* is significant of the new approach. It demonstrates how a bunch of workmen set themselves to achieve the tempo of American technique in building a dam; and it is not the dam which is the triumph, but the tempo.

They do it humanly; not with sweat on their brows in the old Russian manner, but with sweat at the midriff, in the new. That is the quality of *Men and Jobs*, and it is the most pleasant and most powerful sign in cinema since Pudovkin made a mess of his *Simple Case*. That was undoubtedly the most important failure of all in the period of experiment.

To round off the point, it is well to recall these intermediate films. *The General Line* fell back melodramatically on a poisoning kulak to make drama of co-operative farms. It devoted its intimate observation—by default—to a milk separator. *Earth* similarly introduced a murdering kulak. *Turksib* with drought, desert storm, and snow-bound winter, fell back on the elemental appeal of epic. *Thunder Over Mexico* went, with equal romanticism, to Mexico. *Counterplan* used sabotage; problem enough for the Russians, but still, in a sense, a secondary problem. No one thought, like Sydney, to look in his heart and write, or film, the really intimate and therefore more dramatic problem of a nation at school. The soldier had come from the war, the peasant was in the factory, and a sorry job they were making of their new and bewildering world. In *A Simple Case* Pudovkin knew where the matter lay. He knew they were deserting the home front with their filibustering records of ancient victories, but did not know what to do about it, except by imagistic reference to death and resurrection. So conscious, indeed, was he of the problem that he said it all in *Deserter*. The home front was all in all, however difficult. But, in the very act, he himself deserted, as you will remember, for the machine guns of the Hamburg streets. Back, in other words, to blood and battle again. Even when he described his Russian factory his heart was not really in it, for he did not take the trouble to observe either his factory or his factory workers. *Men and Jobs* is the more important, therefore. It takes the trouble to observe both. The acting is not yet in the highest cinematic tradition, for it is not sufficiently integrated in the action, but that technical plaint is relatively unimportant. The ideological advance means everything.

JOHN GRIERSON.

THE SONG OF CEYLON

Production: John Grierson. Direction and Photography: Basil Wright.
Assistant Direction: John Taylor. Music: Walter Leigh.

After twice seeing *The Song of Ceylon* I still find it hard to criticise. The first of its four sections I would call the most powerfully enchanting piece of documentary anyone has yet made. It shows the annual Buddhist pilgrimage up endless steps to the summit of Adam's Peak, where the Buddha set his footprint before leaving the earth. The choice and handling here of realistic detail

show a most sensitive economy, and the patient toil of the climbers is quietly present, without any obvious display of camera tricks, in the visual rhythm. Throughout, there is an occasional commentary drawn from an account of the island written by Robert Knox in the year 1680; the archaic phrases are spoken by Lionel Wendt, of Ceylon, whose remote, grave voice exactly suits the film's atmosphere. This commentary is a brilliant idea, but it means that Wright has had to work within the limits of a very subtle mood not easy to maintain. He is concerned almost entirely with native life, and particularly with native dances, where Buddhism has thinly influenced a much earlier and more primitive religious tradition. He shows us also the fishermen and the harvesters and the women fetching water and other aspects of village life; and as a sound-background to one section there are fragments of disembodied commercial dialogue which briefly suggest the invasions of Western enterprise.

This section seems to me the weakest part of the film, for the voices are ghostly, and the influence of England on Ceylon is not at all ghostly; it is a forcibly transforming influence, leading to fever and conflict. Wright might justifiably have dealt solely with the persistence of native life and custom, away from the ports and towns; but those voices ought to mean more if they are to be there at all. The use of sound and music in other parts of the film is skilful and original, but the effect is always subdued; and Wright, I feel, is inclined to become so absorbed in his material that he forgets his audience. He attempts a symphonic structure, in four movements, but, if the ordinary logic of documentary, based on factual narrative, is to be abandoned, some other kind of logic ought to replace it. A purely imaginative logic, derived from the suggestive power of related images, is not impossible, but Wright brings off this subjective continuity only now and then. Too often there is—so far as I can see—no essential reason why one particular episode should follow another; and it is this discursive tendency—meandering instead of marching—that makes the total effect of the picture not quite satisfying. Too much of the film belongs to Wright's private world; it is too nearly a meditation, not quite enough of a communication.

But I must emphasise that I am applying the highest standards to a film of exceptional quality; a film so full of graphic and expressive detail—for instance, the fisherman whose body lives in the casting of his net—that incidental disappointments are the more evident. The Adam's Peak sequence shows convincingly what can be done in this reticent, reflective style; and its close, with the camera following a water-bird flying over a lake in the early morning, is something I shall always remember.

CHARLES DAVY.

LES MISERABLES

Production: Pathé-Natan. Direction: Raymond Bernard. Photography: J. Kruger. Scenario: André Lang and Raymond Bernard. Art Direction: Jean Perrier. Music: Arthur Honegger. With Harry Baur, Charles Vanel, Henry Krauss, Marthe Mellot, Gaby Triquet. Length: 9080 feet.

Hugo's vast novel has been filmed in two parts; this first instalment takes the plot down to M. Madeleine's escape from prison after the exposure of his convict past. Even so, there is more than enough material here for one picture; and the special merit of Raymond Bernard's direction is that he covers a lot of ground without ever seeming to be in a hurry. Naturally, there must be large omissions, obvious even to someone who, like myself, has not read the book. For instance, the transformation of Jean Valjean, the brutalized convict, into M. Madeleine, the generous, wealthy and respected Mayor of Montreuil, has to be taken for granted; and there are various other rather abrupt transitions. But the main lines of the story are given; and a solid, deliberate treatment is essential to the atmosphere.

The central theme is a contrast between human feeling and legal justice—or between love and revenge—and it is important to avoid rhetorical over-emphasis. The assize-court scene, when M. Madeleine reveals his identity in order to save an old peasant from conviction as Valjean, might easily have fallen into crude melodrama; Bernard saves it by insistence on precisely realistic detail. Much of the film's success, however, is due to the performance of Harry Baur, a massive figure of a man whose acting has, nevertheless, the delicacy which often goes with great reserves of strength under assured control. As Valjean-Madeleine, he stands like a mountain in the midst of the turbulent action; and something of the heroic scale of Hugo's conception receives in him a credible human form. The supporting parts are all well played—the Bishop and the police inspector are particularly good—and the photography is forcible and clear.

Les Misérables is said to be the most expensive picture ever made in France; it is, nevertheless, the best French production seen here for many months.

CHARLES DAVY.

LE DERNIER MILLIARDAIRE

Production: Pathé-Natan. Scenario and Direction: René Clair. Photography: Rudy Maté and Louis Née. Art Direction: Lucien Aguetane and Lucien Carré. Music: Maurice Jaubert. With Max Dearly, Paul Olivier, Raymond Cordy, José Noguero, Marthe Mellot. Length: 8100 feet.

Humour either defends or attacks. If it defends, it needs an assured base and a plentiful supply of not really very dangerous enemies. If it attacks, it needs a mood of reckless energy and a solid target. To-day, typical humour attacks; and it is renouncing the indirect attack expressed in the comic-pathetic lament of the out-cast—the gesture of derision of the small boy as he runs away—and is developing a conscious purpose of destruction. (Transition from Chaplin to the Marx Brothers.) René Clair belongs in this contemporary camp of destructive satirists; but he has never yet been free to choose a solid target and shoot straight at it.

Le Dernier Milliardaire is nearly a satire on financiers and dictators butalways, as soon as Clair has let off a few warning shots, someone, rings the bell for the end of the round. The story is about Casinario, a Riviera principality faced with ruin through loss of gambling revenues during the economic depression. M. Banco, a native-born millionaire, is summoned from America; he promises a huge loan in return for the hand of the Princess. On arrival he establishes a dictatorship, gets hit on the head during a palace revolution, and inaugurates a crazy regime of inconsequent autocracy until another crack on the head restores his wits. By this time the Princess has eloped with a band leader, so M. Banco marries the Queen.

One sequence is brilliant: the Casinarians, owing to a currency shortage, resort to barter, and a young man at the Casino, intending to shoot himself, drops his revolver on a winning number and is passed a pile of revolvers by the croupier. Some further barter episodes are good, but soon over; other entertaining touches are numerous but scattered; the music, based on the Casinarian national anthem, is ingeniously diverting; the acting, with Max Dearly as Banco, is competent; but the total effect is thin, jerky, artificial. Clair is like a rebel put into the nursery to play with puppets; and in a time of real dictatorships and real financial oligarchies the antics of puppet imitations—who must not be too realistic—are hardly good enough.

The future of the humour film does not seem to me very bright. When Fascism is in the air—and it is in the air, more or less, in all countries nowadays—the satirist has to play a lone hand; and in the film industry that means impotence.

CHARLES DAVY.

DEUTSCHLAND ZWISCHEN GESTERN UND HEUTE

Direction and Photography: Wilfried Basse. Music: Wolfgang Zeller.

More than any other recently shown, this film reveals the distinctions between the British and Continental understanding of documentary. Cross-sectioning with laborious detail and some rather shaky photography almost every aspect of German life before the Third Reich, it typifies the Continental school of realism by observing only the pictorial surface of the scene and avoiding the main social issues. It was said for Basse by Arnheim in an earlier *Cinema Quarterly* that he intended to show how the styles of living in former times are still affecting modern life, that from the prehistoric forms of a primitive economic system the film leads historically over the Gothic style to Renaissance, from baroque to rococo, from the *Biedermeierzeit* to the complacency of the present middle-class society, the provincial character of which makes possible the crescendo of a modern city's activity. But I doubt very much whether Basse does anything of the sort.

We have all the ingredients of a photographer's album, townspeople and country folk, pastimes and processions, customs and conventions, industry and agriculture, mediaeval city and modern metropolis. They are all well shuffled and labelled, arranged in order like the illustrations of a good picture-book, with the camera roving here and there and roundabout, albeit unsteadily. But, as with Ruttmann, so with Basse. Nothing is related socially. Nothing is said creatively. Nothing really lives, except at twenty-four pictures a second. The long-winded procession of images meanders along without drive or purpose. Running to story-feature length, the film reveals the weakness of a purposeless theme. Unrelated geographically, the images are put together in some form of contrast from which the mildest of implications might be drawn. A few fleeting comments on the childishness of official parades, passing observations on the idiotic behaviourism of the *petite bourgeoisie*, but that is all. It lacks, may I say it, a propagandist urge.

But, most important of all, it exposes beyond argument that no matter how big the subject or how wide the location, documentary must be short, concise and every foot to the point.

PAUL ROTH.

THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL. (*British. London Films.*) Alexander Korda's new film has the wit and sophistication characteristic of the London Films product; but, more fortunate than *The Private Life of Don Juan*, which in some degree also had those qualities, it has a rounded and smoothly flowing script and a highly skilled actor as a star attraction. The scenarists—Robert E. Sherwood of *Reunion in Vienna*, S. N. Behrman of *Queen Christina*, and Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*—have retained the liveliest scenes of the Baroness Orczy novel and have added something of humour and sophistication. We are in “the finest age of English taste,” and the film always tries to suggest this atmosphere. Were it not for the polished acting, particularly of Leslie Howard, fallow patches, occasionally apparent, would be more plainly revealed; but Howard is studied, resourceful and charming, his timing perfect as always; and he is in skilled company with Nigel Bruce, Raymond Massey and Merle Oberon. It is significant that a major influence on the film is the art direction of Vincent Korda. Harold Young (after Rowland Brown's departure) directed, and the camera-work, which gives the film some picturesque moments, is by Hal Rosson, from M.-G.-M.

F. H.

THE IRON DUKE. (*British. G.-B.*) “Lives of great men all remind us how like George Arliss they were.” This aspect of the film—it was no surprise—apart, it may be said in its favour, that it attempts a bigger subject than the average seven-penny novelette or penny dreadful of the screen. In the course of the spectacular flirting with history, occasionally sentiments are expressed which are capable of modern application—talk among the Allies of demanding indemnity and Wellington's reference in the House of Lords to Britain's implication in European affairs. These, with the superficial account of Wellington's activities during the years 1815-16, give the film, on paper, a slight significance. But on the screen it lacks life and form, and Victor Saville's direction is flat and uninspired. For one moment the film breaks out free from what is probably more the Arliss than the Saville influence: during the Waterloo episode and, particularly, the vivid and exciting charge of the Scots Greys. Here, at least, there is opportunity to appreciate the quality of Curt Courant's photography.

F. H.

MARIE (*Franco-Hungarian. Osso Films.*)—This French version of a Hungarian national legend, directed by Paul Fejos with Annabella as star, illustrates how disastrous is the naturalistic approach to a theme which demands fanciful treatment. Until near the end, it is a more or less bald account (in the Gaynor tradition) of the hardships endured by a servant girl in search of work. Then the girl is translated to heaven (with *Folies Bergère* backcloth), which results in a disconcerting clash of styles. We have been invited to believe in a real tragedy—betrayed girl dismissed by harsh mistress—and without warning comes the intrusion of fantastic elements. *Marie* appears to have been deliberately made as an “international” film; but it is not sufficiently national to achieve its object. Dialogue is sparsely used to facilitate dubbing, and for no other reason. The problems presented by the sound-track are evaded rather than solved.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH. (*British. G.-B.*) Alfred Hitchcock is much more comfortable and successful with this melodrama of a plot to assassinate a foreign statesman in London than he was with the romantic musical comedy of *Waltzes from Vienna*. The story by Charles Bennett and D. B. Wyndham Lewis has at least its implausibilities and is seldom reasonable; and it is a measure of Hitchcock's melodramatic success that he can still create suspense in these cir-



Greta Garbo in "The Painted Veil," an adaptation of Somers t Maugham's novel directed by Richard Boleslavski

THE PRESS UNANIMOUS
LONDON FILM
"THE SCARLET"

● **OBSERVER** :—" I unhesitatingly give the accolade for the year's best picture to " The Scarlet Pimpernel," and it is rather comforting to find, after all the hard things we have had to say from time to time about our native product, that a British production scrambled into 1934 with a ten-day margin has proved to be the most moving, sensitive and consistently entertaining of the year's films."

● **SUNDAY TIMES** :—" As an adventure, or series of adventures, it is unsurpassable. In every respect it constitutes a triumph for the British Film World. It deserves to outrival the popularity of ' Henry VIII.' I recommend this film unreservedly to all."

● **MORNING POST** :—" An extraordinarily fine film steeped in adventure and gallantry."

● **DAILY MAIL** :—" This film is distinguished by the fidelity of the narrative and the general excellence of the acting by a remarkable cast headed by Leslie Howard and Merle Oberon. It is likewise adorned by the magnificent photography of settings of exclusive loveliness. I prophesy a spectacular success wherever it is seen."

● **SUNDAY PICTORIAL** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' is a film of sheer loveliness."

● **EVENING STANDARD** :—" This is the best film that Korda has produced. There can be no doubt about that. It is the last word in historical films, witty, exciting, romantic and beautiful all in one."

● **NEWS CHRONICLE** :—" In its glamour, suspense, beauty, wit and humour, this must certainly be recommended among the leading pictures of the year."

● **DAILY EXPRESS** :—" It makes you feel young again. Here Leslie Howard is in his element. You will hear sharp little bursts of applause on his behalf as many as three times in the film."

● **DAILY TELEGRAPH** :—" ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' will undoubtedly have a very long run at the Leicester Square Theatre. Alexander Korda should repeat the world-wide success he had with ' Henry VIII.' Indeed, I should not be surprised if ' The Scarlet Pimpernel ' does even better."

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● **THE TIMES** :—"The spirit of the book is in it. It is guileless adventure unspoilt by any of the so-called improvements which a less discreet studio might have invented."

● **SUNDAY EXPRESS** :—"It is the best thing I have ever seen Leslie Howard do, and he has done many good things. I am not sure that it is not the performance of the year."

● **SUNDAY DISPATCH** :—"Charged with audience dynamite!"

● **SUNDAY REFEREE** :—" 'The Scarlet Pimpernel' is a great British film, a thrilling, wonderful entertainment."

● **DAILY MIRROR** :—" 'The Scarlet Pimpernel,' with its gripping and deftly constructed story and picturesque settings, is a stirring entertainment which should have a world-wide success."

● **DAILY SKETCH** :—"I advise you to make a point of seeing this famous tale so vividly told on the screen."

● **SUNDAY GRAPHIC** :—"Superb is the only word for Leslie Howard's performance."

● **SUNDAY CHRONICLE** :—"Alexander Korda has done it again. Not only is this as good a film as we have ever made, but it shows Leslie Howard as an even better actor than one would have ever suspected. All this film is good—story, settings, general acting, and production."

● **OBSERVER** :—"I should recommend that you make a bee-line for the Leicester Square Theatre and see 'The Scarlet Pimpernel.' This film is not only the best entertainment for the holiday season, but, I would suggest, the most skilful bit of all-round craftsmanship that has ever been done in a British Studio."

● **DAILY HERALD** :—"Korda's fresh triumph—'The Scarlet Pimpernel' is a grand film."

● **NEWS OF THE WORLD** :—"It is a production which you should enter into your diary with a note—'must see this.'"

● **FILM WEEKLY** :—"If anyone still doubts that Leslie Howard is one of the most polished, resourceful and charming actors who have ever graced the screen, let him see this!"

ALEXANDER KORDA

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cumstances. His method, as Charles Davy has pointed out, is to attempt to make melodrama realistic by keying it down into a casual, easy-going mood, with clipped dialogue quietly spoken and a few very obvious displays of emotion; this apparently in the belief that melodramatic events will appear more exciting if they are presented against the background of a normal world. Often, if not always, his method produces the right result—in the “Tabernacle of the Sun” sequence, in the dramatic episode of the Albert Hall concert and in the siege of the gang’s barricaded hide-out at Wapping (a reproduction of the Sidney Street affair). The excitement of those moments is in contrast to the artificiality of, for example, the opening scenes in Switzerland. The acting is for the most part simple and straightforward, but there is real subtlety in the performance of Peter Lorre, the Dusseldorf murderer of *M*, as the anarchist leader. With *Murder* in mind, the surprise of the film is the absence of any expressive use of sound.

F. H.

FORGOTTEN MEN. (*British. B.I.P.*) Devised and arranged by Norman Lee. Unlike most previous war pictures, whose episodes were staged and artificial, *Forgotten Men* is real and authentic, being composed of pictures taken between 1914 and 1918 by official photographers from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. The material is arranged chronologically, with comment by Sir John Hammerton and by a number of ex-Servicemen who, in awkward interpolations, describe their personal experiences. Detailed documentary is not the aim. Rather the aim of the film is to persuade those who see it that war is waste—waste of human life, destruction of the countryside, the squandering of a nation’s resources, a brake on civilization. It is negative peace propaganda: it suggests that war is a wasteful method of settling international disputes, but does not point to another. As a revelation of the horror of war, the film depends on personal reaction. It ought to be shown, not in a super cinema, but in a water-logged, draughty barn.

F. H.

THE ORIENT CRUISE FILMS: *Sea Change, Northern Summer, People and Places, Sheltered Waters.*

Cruising has so much become a part of the nation’s vacation that sooner or later someone was certain to make the first intelligent cruise film. In actual fact, Alexander Shaw has made a group of four resulting from material gathered by himself and Evelyn Spice on Orient Line cruises during 1934. For the most part nicely observed and intelligently shot, the films certainly succeed in their purpose; that is to say, they give some definite idea of the places you visit and the people you meet as guests of this courteous shipping line, at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of mere plain description. Whether interpreting the drama of a high-dive or creating the leisurely mood of sun-bathing, Shaw has done his job with imagination aided by, in the main, some nice photography from George Noble. With the sound, all is not quite so happy. Some revision might be necessary should the films be eventually put out to the theatres. It is possible that Shaw may have got into his head preconceived ideas of “orchestrated” and “imagistic” uses of sound and, because of his anxiety to keep up with the times, introduced experiments which were not justified by the screen material. This, as well as the fact that two of the films lack construction and do not progress to any dramatic issue, prompts the suggestion that, after the films have had their initial road-showing to restricted audiences, Shaw be given the opportunity to condense his material into a dramatically conceived two-reel documentary for theatre audiences where it would be assured of wide success.

PAUL ROTH.

POST HASTE. (*British. G.P.O. Films. John Grierson.*) An effective method of putting history on the screen has proved elusive and the reconstruction of the past has seldom been done with much satisfaction. In the romantic historical films it has become a matter of fanciful, if not completely irrelevant, detail. Henry's wives and Bruce's spider have taken the place of more significant elements. In recent years, history books have somewhat altered in character, and students have been encouraged to probe into the documents of the past instead of accepting someone's imaginative reconstruction. This new G.P.O. experiment, *Post Haste*, may have interesting repercussions in this connection. It tells of some three hundred years of Post Office history in this country, and is composed almost entirely of period illustrations from the British Museum collection. They are mostly prints and embody a contemporary comment on current affairs. They are carefully photographed and effectively edited by Humphrey Jennings. The result is an intimate, exact and informative account. Occasional sound effects give life to the old prints and a three-part commentary is humorous and instructive. The film effectively points to one successful method of reconstructing the past.

THOMAS BAIRD.

SCOTS AMATEUR FESTIVAL

Andrew Buchanan was the adjudicator at the second Scottish Amateur Film Festival, held under the auspices of the Meteor Film Producing Society in Glasgow. This year the scope was widened and the competitions, divided into four classes, were opened to English as well as Scottish clubs. The prize-winning film was *Seven Till Five*, produced by the Glasgow School of Art Kinecraft Society. This film, which gave an impression of a day in the College, Mr. Buchanan described as a piece of real cinema. Its director, Norman McLaren, revealed an intelligent understanding of film technique. In the class for story films, the award was given to the Meteor Film Society's *Situations Vacant*, a consequence tale of the dismissal of employees from a Glasgow office, directed by Stanley L. Russell. The award in the class for interest films was divided between *Seven Till Five* and *The Outer Isles*, W. H. George's film of the Hebrides. In the class for interest films confined to Scottish entrants, the successful picture was *Edge o' Winter*, a grouping of shots in colour by Ian S. Ross. In the class for sound films was an ambitious news-reel impression of the work of the Glasgow police. The Meteor Society, organisers of the Festival, are to be congratulated on their efforts to encourage amateur film-making and to guide the activities of societies along the most profitable channels.

RECORD OF SUBSTANDARD FILMS

IN RESPONSE to numerous enquiries *Cinema Quarterly* is compiling a record of substandard films of a documentary, educational, or experimental nature. Both amateur and commercial producers are invited to submit details of such films, including contents, size, length, and also rates and conditions of hiring.

WE regret to announce the untimely death of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, following an operation for peritonitis. Only thirty-three years of age, his interest in cinema was very real, and he had hoped that his novel "Sunset Song" would be adapted for the screen. He was about to commence the scenario when he became ill. The article printed in this issue was one of the last things he wrote.—N.W.

CUTTINGS

As the art of the people, the screen must be allowed to reflect life truthfully, and our job is to keep it so instead of allowing it to be forced into vulgarity or saccharine side-channels.—Cecil B. de Mille, *The Cinema*.

Hollywood has never paid British traditions a finer compliment than in the film shown here to-day for the first time, of Major Yeats-Brown's best seller, *Bengal Lancer*. Of the original story nothing has been kept but the title, and there is not a Yogi or a line of mysticism in the whole film.—*Daily Telegraph*.

Blessed events are jealously guarded secrets in Hollywood. . . . The Mervyn le Roys managed to keep their Coming Event a secret for five months.—*Motion Picture*.

The nation-wide church campaign to "clean-up" pictures has obtained such good results that the West End Citizens' Association Censorship Committee has decided further work will be unnecessary.—*Washington Star*.

There was a young American actress, called Claudette Colbert, of whom I formed a very favourable opinion when I was in New York, but, alas, the poor girl has gone to Hollywood—abandoned the stage for the bloody screen. Imagine anyone preferring tinned salmon to fresh salmon. . . . Will Rogers and Eddie Cantor are among the immortals.—St. John Ervine, *The Era*.

Hollywood actors can generally be relied upon in cases of emergency, but . . . you can't get them to act crazy!

Walter Wagner, who is making *Private Worlds*—a story with the background of an asylum—for Paramount, wanted five or six players who could act "slightly nuts," as he put it. He had given tests to over 200 when he finished for the day, but he is still wanting his five or six players. None of the 200 had the faintest ideas of how to act "a trifle cuckoo."—*Paramount Picture News*.

What the Picture Did for Me. *365 Nights in Hollywood*. Two nights was too long for this one. Jimmy Dunn miscast again, and this Mitchell and Durant are another pair of radio stars that when seen on the screen are very unfunny. In fact, they are worse than that. They are an acute pain in the neck to every part of the anatomy that I know of.—A. E. Hancock, Showman's Review in *Motion Picture Herald*.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

RUDOLF ARNHEIM. Author of "Film." Now preparing a book on Television.
KIRK BOND. Baltimore film critic.

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI. Director of *En Rade*, *Pett and Pott*, etc.

CHARLES DAVY. Film critic of "The Spectator" and "The Yorkshire Post."

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON. Author of "Sunset Song," "Cloud Howe," etc.

Has written numerous novels and works on mythology under the name J. Leslie Mitchell.

JOHN GRIERSON. Producer of G.P.O. Films.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES. Director of Everyman Cinema, Hampstead.

CLIFFORD LEECH. Lecturer at University College, Swansea.

WALTER LEIGH. Studied under Hindemith. Composer of several comic operas, including "Jolly Roger" and "Pride of the Regiment." Arranged and composed the music for *The Song of Ceylon*.

PAUL ROTH. At present directing documentaries for Gaumont-British Instructional. His new book, "Documentary Films," will be published in the spring.

FILM SOCIETIES

MORE NEW SOCIETIES. Several new groups are in course of formation. In Wolverhampton, E. L. Packer, 119 Lord Street, and in Swansea, Clifford Leech, University College, will be pleased to hear from anyone interested in plans for these centres. In Scotland, a Federation of Scottish Film Societies has been formed. Membership of the Federation, which it is intended should work in co-operation with the Federation of British Film Societies, is open to organizations in Scotland existing chiefly for the propagation of an interest in the artistic and cultural values of the film. Its main objects are the consolidation of the interests of such societies and the development of the movement in areas where no societies at present exist. The chairman is George Martin Gray, of Aberdeen, and the Hon. Secretary is Forsyth Hardy, 17 S. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2.

HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY. A Film Society has been organized by Hampstead residents with the Everyman Cinema Theatre as its headquarters. J. S. Fairfax-Jones is acting as secretary. The objects of the society are to show films not normally given public exhibition, to revive classic films of the past, and to form a centre for discussion of technical and artistic matters relating to the cinema. Among those on the Council are C. E. M. Joad, Clough Williams-Ellis, Paul Rotha, Lawrence Hanray and Maxwell Ayrton.

CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY. The Children's Film Society, which also has the Everyman Cinema Theatre, Hampstead, as its headquarters, is now entering the second half of its first season with a large subscribing membership. The society not only exhibits specially selected films, but makes a point of having a short talk on some aspect of film-making at each performance. Among those who have spoken at performances are Arthur Elton, Mary Field, Stuart Legg and Paul Rotha. The Secretary is Miss C. W. Harley, and among those on the Council are Mrs. Naomi Mitchison, Miss H. B. Tudor Hart, W. T. R. Rawson and Mrs. Amabel Williams-Ellis. The Directors are G. F. Noxon, C. Lawson Reece and J. S. Fairfax-Jones.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. 28th Oct. *Joie de Vivre*, *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, *Weather Forecast*, *Deutschland zwischen gestern und heute*. 25th Nov. *Beyond this Open Road*, *Cathode Ray Oscillograph*, *Gasparcolor*, *Das Rollende Rad*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Zero de Conduite*. 16th Dec. *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker*, Three Minute diagrams, *All Quiet in the East*, *Oil Symphony*, *Song of Ceylon*, *The Idea*. 13th Jan. *Rhapsody in Steel*, Three early fragments, *How Talkies Talk*, *Der Tonfilm*, *Nachtliche Ruhestörung*, *Sabra*.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., A. L. Stephen Mitchell, 15 Golden Square. 18th Nov. *In der Nacht*, *Harlequin*, *Liebelei*. 9th Dec. *Überfall*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*.

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Secs., H. S. Coles and Mrs. E. H. Sale, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Norton-on-Tees. 21st Nov. *Bronx Morning*, Disney's *The Picnic*, *Prenez Garde à la Peinture*. 19th Dec. *Mail*, Disney's *Springtime*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street. 16th Dec. *Harlequin*, *Weather Forecast*, *Road to Life*.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 S. St. Andrew Street. 28th Oct. *Spring on the Farm*, *Weather Forecast*, *Pett and Pott*, *Charlemagne*. 18th Nov. *Symphony of the Streets*, *Contact*, *Mail*, *Prenez Garde à la Peinture*. 16th Dec. G.-B. Magazine, *The Right*

to Write, *New Europe*, *Nature Secret Roots*, *How Talkies Talk*, *Upstream*, *Mickey's Gala Premiere*, *Rapt.* 20th Jan. *Beyond this Open Road*, *Rhapsody in Steel*, *Post Haste*, *The Idea*, *Men and Jobs*.

Lectures have been given by John Grierson on "Sound," Forsyth Hardy on "Production," and Andrew Buchanan on "Direction." Sub-standard versions of *Metropolis* and *The Spy* have also been shown.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec., D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. 4th Nov. *Mail*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Liebes Kommando*. 25th Nov. *Joyless Street*, *Weather Forecast*, *L'Ordonnance*. 16th Dec. *Royal Windsor*, Disney's *Frolicking Fish*, *Marie*. 13th Jan. *Upstream*, *Pett and Pott*, *Charlemagne*.

Lectures have been given by C. A. Oakley on "The German Cinema," and Clifford Strain on "Amateur Production." At both meetings sub-standard films were shown.

HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY. Sec., J. S. Fairfax-Jones, Everyman Cinema, Hampstead, London, N.W.3. 23rd Dec. *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Gasparcolor*, *Pett and Pott*, *Pred Maturitou*.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College. 17th Nov. *Ballet Aida*, *La Vie d'un Fleuve*, Reiniger's *Carmen*, *Charlemagne*. 15th Dec. *Oberon Overture*, *Early Every Morning*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Thunder over Mexico*, *Plants of the Underworld*.

Lectures have been given by Mary Field on "Nature Films" and Prof. T. H. Pear on "Psychological Aspects of the Film."

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 69 Liverpool Street, Salford. 20th Oct. *Industrial Britain*, *La Maternelle*. 17th Nov. *Ombres sur L'Europe*, *The Living Corpse*. 15th Dec. *Hand Drawn Sound*, *Pacific 231*, *New Europe*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. 11th Oct. *Grass* (Sub-st.). Talk by John Grierson. 18th Oct. *Waxworks* (Sub-st.). 25th Oct. Peter le Neve Foster on "Film-making in Russia," illustrated by films. 29th Oct. Reception to Paul Rotha. 6th Nov. Exhibition of amateur films. 29th Nov. *Crazy Ray* (Sub-st.). 10th, 11th, 12th Dec. *Storm over Asia* (Sub-st.). 20th Dec. *Warning Shadows* (Sub-st.). The following films have also been shown: *Pett and Pott*, *New Europe*, *Tour de Chant*, *Un Monastere*, *Harlequin*, *Pacific 231*. The Society organizes support for outstanding films shown locally.

NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., H. A. Green, 6 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.16. 4th Nov. *Canal Barge*, *Bluebottles*, *Carmen*, *Road to Life*. 9th Dec. Poster Films, Cinemagazine, Schufftan Shots, *Pett and Pott*, *Joan of Arc*. 6th Jan. *Eyes of Science*, *Lichtertanz*, *Under the City*, *Eternal Triangle*, *Fall of the House of Usher*, *War is Hell*.

Lectures have been given by Andrew Buchanan, A. Vesselo, and Paul Rotha. Other film exhibitions have included *Grass*, G.P.O. films, and an experimental film by H. A. Green, Secretary of the Society.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. W. Baldwin Fletcher, ICI(Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. 30th Oct. *Wheat Fields of East Anglia*, *The Mascot*, Fischinger's *Hungarian Dance*, *Black Magic*. 4th Dec. *Japan in Four Seasons*, Cinemagazine, *Silly Symphony*, *Emperor Jones*. 22nd Jan. *Mail*, *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Fourteenth of July*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. 21st Oct. Disney's *Giantland* and *Lullaby Land*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. 4th Nov. *Cable Ship*, *Les Pirates du Rhone*, *Poil de Carotte*. 18th Nov. 6.30 Collection, *The Pawnshop*, Disney's *Pioneer Days*, *Diary of a Revolutionist*. 25th Nov. *Halley's Comet*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Motor Magnate*, *Marie*. 2nd Dec. *Their First Mistake*, Disney's *Moose Hunt*, *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, *Silly Symphony* French version, *Zero de Conduite*.

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY, 21 Ethelburt Avenue, Bassett Green, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester. Nov. Cinemagazine, *Crazy Ray*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*. 9th Dec. *What the Newsreel Shows*, *Morgenrot*, *Gasparcolor*.

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY, c/o Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle. 11th Nov. *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Zuts' Cartoon, Fishinger's *Hungarian Dance*, Surprise Item, *Road to Life*. 9th Dec. *La Maternelle*.

Discussions are held in the Society's clubroom, where periodical exhibitions of films are also given.

WEST OF SCOTLAND WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., James Hough, 16 Balerno Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2. 4th Nov. *Turksib*, *Blue Angel*. 18th Nov. *Fifteenth October*, *The Mighty World*, *Kameradschaft*. 2nd Dec. *Power*, *O'er Hill and Dale*, *Seal Hunters*, *Blue Express*. 23rd Dec. Disney's *Merry Dwarfs*, Rutman's *Wonder of the World*, *War is Hell*. 6th Jan. Cartoon, *Battle of Life*, *Virtuous Isidore*. 20th Jan. Disney's *Springtime*, *King Log*, *Storm over Asia*.

Members are now entitled to introduce not more than two guests to each performance at a fee of 1s. 6d. each.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY, 7 North Terrace, Cambridge, in conjunction with the National Council of Civil Liberties, has convened a meeting to discuss the question of film censorship and the threat to the educational and sub-standard cinema implied in certain proposed new regulations for non-flam films.

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HARD WORDS TO AMATEURS

INCREASING thousands of feet of film are exposed by amateurs every year. The percentage worth preserving for exhibition to intelligent audiences cannot be more than 10 per cent.—the remaining 90 per cent. being, to put it bluntly, drivel. The animated family album type of exposure can be dismissed at once with giggles and groans; but any amateur who attempts editing deserves enlightenment upon the use of films. There are many so-called film clubs where cine-cameras are used by amateurs to perpetrate meandering efforts meant to emulate the film industry in slickness, glitter, gaudiness and empty-headedness. Of what do these film clubs generally consist? Social club (with an eye to match-making), amateur dramatic society, picnic club and gossip shop. These clubs spend most of their time in producing the very worst kind of stage play, boring to distraction. When finished they are shown to relations, friends and other clubs of a similar nature; and there, useless, they finish. Nothing is said of even superficial import, nobody a tittle the better for making the things and everybody already squabbling about the casting of the next abortion.

Why, then, are these things so? The urge to appear as star; the urge to boast "I direct"; the urge to strut before relations and colleagues at the office—these are some of the reasons. Again, who are prouder or more pleased than they when the neighbours are found hanging on the garden fence, with mouths agape, eyeing the self-conscious simperings of the amateur film club? It seems that the film is merely a vehicle for the appeasement of vanity and suppressed egoisms.

Are there, then, any amateurs doing worth-while jobs? Yes! Let

us be thankful that there are amateur film-makers with something to say, who are more interested in cinema than in themselves. Unfortunately these film-makers are either lone workers, handicapped by lack of capital, or else small groups of semi-professionals who are soon absorbed by the film industry proper. From these people come unpretentious films, simple accounts of honest ordinary affairs, revealing insight into commonplace occurrences happening every day, but unperceived by the other 90 per cent. intent on imitation.

Intent on imitation they are waiting for the commercial companies to begin producing documentary, and then slavishly they will follow in the wake of mediocrity. Always attempting counterfeits and never conveying any other impression than that of wasted effort and complete futility.

Amateurs—some of you 90 per cent.—leave your lights, your pseudo-studios, your clumsy grease paints and gauche acting—run right out of doors and look around at life. Trees, clouds, smoke, birds, everything that moves. Children playing, women washing clothes, men sawing wood, actuality. This is the stuff for your films. Take this material and with heart, mind and imagination weld it into an expression of your view of life.

It isn't the grand things that matter so much as the smaller, unnoticed incidentals. Only from understanding in small things can come that knowledge that enables creation from a vaster and more comprehensive apprehension of things. Come to grips with life. No escaping into tawdry romantics and pseudo-aesthetics.

Do not imagine that these films can be made from combined spiritual experiences. There can be only one director, one who has written and re-written; raved in passion and frustration over the building of the script. This is the director to whom all amateur film-makers must swear loyalty, unquestionable obedience. Only then will amateurs produce films that will make the punjabs in Wardour Street sit up and tremble.

It can be done—it will be done—but I am impatient to see it done now.

LESLIE BEISIEGEL

LONDON IFMA GROUP.

Meetings have been taking place every Monday evening in members' flats. Several films have been projected and rushes of *Markets*, being the result of Heino Held's Billingsgate expeditions, which resulted in some first-class shooting considering the bad conditions under which he had to work. Shooting on *Markets* has had to be abandoned owing to bad weather and insufficient light. Some experimental shooting done on Armistice Day round Westminster raised mirth.

Discussions have generally centred on scripts. The first to be submitted was a satire on marching, in which use is made of an experimental form of shooting. This, however, was rejected owing to the majority of the members disagreeing

about the form and dictator-director notions of the script-writer. The second scenario was written by D. J. C. Beck who showed the deceit and duplicity of the armament manufactures on Armistice Day, and the power of music and uniform in raising the militant spirit.

EXHIBITION OF KINEMATOGRAPHY.

This exhibition was held by the Royal Photographic Society at their Galleries in Russell Square, London, during the month of November. The exhibition consisted of a large collection of stills from British films of recent date, many of them still in production, a selection of film personalities and stills from amateur producing societies. Various models of sub-standard projectors both silent and sound, models of the latest cine-cameras, and a 35 mm. super-speed camera. A section of the stills showed the technics of set building, model work, and trick photography used in studio productions. Some stills showed the ingenious faking in the larger scenes of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

In the film competition open to workers on sub-standard, the plaque for Class One was awarded to John Chear for his *Bird Studies* on 9.5. The plaque for Class Two went to G. H. F. Higginson for a 16 mm. film entitled *Pond Life*. Several types of film were projected and some amateur productions. In the ten meetings held, the many new technical processes of colour, trick photography and timing apparatus were demonstrated. Mary Field, Basil Wright, F. Watts and Oliver G. Pike gave lectures on certain aspects of the cinema.

KINO.

Kino (86 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1) is an organisation of amateur film-workers using the film as a medium of propagating Communist philosophy. It has an active news-reel group operating much the same as the commercial companies. Two news-reels have been produced dealing with several demonstrations, including the one at Olympia, Air Display, Gresford Colliery Disaster, International Workers' Sports in Paris, etc. Another group is engaged in producing an Anti-Fascist film, and yet another group in the production of features. The last group has made the film *Bread*, described as a drama of the Means Test. Two of their cameramen are to give lessons in cine-camera craft to about six pupils at a time, the fees being low. Kino intend organizing an exhibition of photographs from the Workers' Film and Photo League, in which prizes will be given for the best social as well as technical photographs submitted. A film hire service is now in operation for the distribution of Soviet films.

SON OF A SOLDIER. Direction: LEBEDIEV. Reduced from silent 35 mm. copy to 16 mm. Distributors: KINO FILM HIRE SERVICE.

The narrative centres on the life of a boy in the Russia of 1905. The typical school of that period, with its tyrannical old priest and his teaching of Gabriel and the fiery chariot, is done extremely well, but is apt to grow wearisome owing to its length. However, when the boy is (literally) chucked out of school, the real film begins. This delightful rascal gets employment at the local factory, illegally using child labour. The lodger at the boy's home is employed there as an engineer, and together they are absorbed by the then revolutionary ideas of Communism.

When one of the boys is injured by a truck which should have been fitted with brakes, there is a disturbance amongst the workers in the factory which breaks out anew when the Factory Inspector is hurried away by the owner without having seen the exploitation and dangerous practices going on. The Cossacks are called in to quell the disturbance, and on finding a crowd of factory hands assembled, tear down on them with bared sabres.

The boy saves the lodger from being struck down by the Cossack captain by hurling a bolt into the Cossack's eye. He in turn is struck down. Back again in his home, wounded and lying on a couch, he sees his father just returned from the battle with Japan. But before much is said the Cossack captain arrives and threatens the boy, striking him and insulting the father standing stiffly at a salute. The father kills the Cossack by striking him on the head. The film is at an end.

All the factory sets are excellent; the direction is notable for the complete absence of camera-consciousness on the part of the children. Humour, sometimes riotous, runs all through the film.

IFMA SUMMER SCHOOL. Peter le Neve Foster.

Here are all the events that happened at Welwyn. Basil Wright and Stuart Legg are seen, and there is some cross-cutting of members dining and pigs wallow about in sties. As is evident, the weather was ideal for filming, obliging clouds waiting for Foster to fit his filters and shoot them, posed gracefully above the charming Conference House. Copies can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary at 12s. 6d.

GLASGOW INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' GROUP is to be reorganized. Experiments with Dufay colour film are to be made, and a documentary dealing with the working of a modern super-cinema is under consideration. The group would welcome new members who are both enthusiasts and workers. The annual subscription is one guinea, and meetings are held at the Neo-film Studio, 42 High Street, Paisley.

All who are responsible for the design, purchase, or maintenance of sound-film apparatus should obtain a copy of "British Standard Specification for Photo-electric Cells of the Emission Type for Sound-Film Apparatus." (London: British Standards Institution, 2s.) There should now no longer be any excuse for misunderstanding between manufacturer and purchaser as to the meaning of such terms as "sensitivity" and "variation of frequency response." An important feature of the specification is the standardization of dimensions.

■ The Workers' Film and Photo League, 86 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, has been formed to produce its own films recording the industrial and living conditions of British workers and the struggle of the employed and unemployed to improve these conditions; to popularize Russian films; to criticize current commercial films in the press and in its own literature; and to arrange lectures to working-class organizations.

Independent cine-workers should be interested in a new activity of the Film Editorial Service of 130 Wardour Street, W. 1, which is opening an Advisory and a Service Bureau under the direction of Fred Pullin.

The former offers constructive criticism on scenarios or completed films, while the latter attends to such technical matters as cutting, titling, fades, dissolves, wipes, or is prepared if necessary to take the uncut film as it leaves the camera, and produce a properly edited copy ready for presentation.

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

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1935

SUBTLETY ON THE SCREEN. "The film," says Campbell Nairne in an article in this issue of *Cinema Quarterly*, "is, by its very nature, a medium incapable of being at once subtle and intelligible."

We must either accept this statement at its face value, and reluctantly place the film as a means of expression at a lower level than most of its protagonists would admit it to be, or else reconsider our idea of what is meant by subtlety and intelligibility, along with what we understand as cinema.

To be intelligible, in its broadest sense, implies surely that the ideas expressed by their creator may be readily comprehended by the spectator. In this respect, by creating its illusions by means of naturalistic material, the film can be as simple as a child's first picture book. Subtlety, on the other hand, is a more cerebral accomplishment, demanding a delicate apprehension of the finer shades of thought and expression.

On considerations apart from even the grossly commercial one of requiring to address the largest possible audience, what Nairne calls the "momentariness" of the film would seem to limit expression to a studied simplicity. "Momentariness" means that unless the image and its accompanying aural are immediately understandable the spectator will have failed to grasp their significance before other images and other sounds will be engrossing his attention. Thus it would appear that the film-maker's powers of expression are restricted not to the compass of his own abilities but to the physiological limitations of the spectator—hence the well-worn but readily understood symbolism of the average Hollywood production. The use of the cliché in journalism recently was defended on the grounds that the familiar phrase ought to be regarded as an ideograph, or omnibus expression, and accepted as any single word in common use is accepted. But journalism is not literature, and while the cliché and picture-book simplicity may be necessary in the average feature film, which must tell its tale with precision and speed, it does not follow that the medium, as a whole, is incapable of subtlety.

Campbell Nairne is a novelist, and his view of the film is justified

by his experience as an imaginative craftsman. The full-length dramatic film must rely on a rapid progressiveness and a rigid economy of means for its effect. It cannot afford to be discursive, to elaborate detail, or to indulge in subjective analysis—all of which are prerogatives of the novelist's art. But the dramatic feature film is not all cinema, and it is not without significance that certain modern poets such as W. H. Auden and C. Day Lewis are coming to regard the film as a medium worth consideration. When they get to grips with it in their experiments they may discover that its technique is not greatly different from that of their own poetry. It may even transpire that what they have been attempting to do in verse will achieve finality in film.

SCOPE FOR THE SHORT FILM. The truth is, there are many kinds of film—not just “film.” Actually the technique of the long film has more in common with that of the short story than of the novel. Was it not Tchekov who gave a sane piece of cinematic advice to a young writer when he said, “You must make them feel the moonlight as it glints from a fragment of bottle in the garden”? The cinema has long been accustomed to borrow from literature, but generally from the wrong sources. If it must learn from another medium, let it consider the short stories of Tchekov, Coppard, Powys, even Katherine Mansfield; the poetry of the imagists; the experiments of sur-realism. Paradoxical as it may seem, the short film has more time at its disposal than the long film, and without having to concern itself with the dramatics of rapid action and constructed situation, can indulge in subjective speculation and the analysis of mental and emotional processes. Only the documentary schools, however, in which the greater part of the intelligence in cinema seems at present to be concentrated, is experimenting boldly along new lines. The only shorts which the commercial studios appear to be capable of making are so-called comedies, which exasperate even star-infatuated audiences who suffer them only to see the glamorous feature they accompany.

True, there have been such excursions in novelty as *Pett and Pott*, *Dawn and Dawn* and *Lot in Sodom*, but these have been independently inspired. The studios are still blind not only to the entertainment value of the short film but to its usefulness as a breeding ground for new ideas and new talent. On the score of risk and expense, experiment in feature-film production is made almost impossible. (A coloured *Becky Sharp* is risked for the prize, not of developing a new technique, but of popularising a technical process of immense potential monetary value.) This bar to experiment is one of the main factors which retard the artistic development of the film. There is, however, little or no financial risk attached to the making

of shorts ; and even if there were, even if every foot of celluloid thus used lost hard cash, it would be worth every penny for the ultimate good of cinema, both artistically and commercially.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SCENARIO.—Ernest Betts, who introduced the admirable idea of publishing film scenarios in book form, evidently imagines from an editorial in our last issue that *Cinema Quarterly* underestimates the importance of the scenario. That is not so. A poor script has ruined many a potentially fine film; that in itself is sufficient gauge of the scenario's place in cinema. Triumphantly, Betts flourishes the fact that even Chaplin uses a scenario. Of course he does. His films would be the poorer if he did not. But they are his own scripts. And that is exactly the point we made, and still make—that scenario and direction should not be divorced from each other, but should be undertaken by the same person, or persons.

Undoubtedly, under present conditions, the scenarist is entitled to greater credit than he now receives, and the director probably less. Conversely, much of the criticism delivered against direction should be levelled against the scenario.

We are asked to hazard a guess as to when films will be the single, individual creation of one person, and to consider whether criticism would be “worth a rap which totally ignored present conditions, namely the organized regimentation of many talents.” But would criticism which complacently accepted conditions as they are be worth anything at all? The “regimentation of talents” must be organized in the best possible way, and any criticism which matters must be concerned not only with what is but with what should be. To answer one question by asking another, does anyone seriously believe that the exact images, movement, rhythm, light and sounds of a film can be reduced to words and sentences so that “a director can read a script as a musician reads a score”?

NON-FLAM FILM TEST CASE. Some months ago the County Durham Police prosecuted the proprietors of a hall in Boldon for allowing the film *Potemkin* to be shown, on the grounds that the 16 mm. stock used was inflammable and therefore came under the Cinematograph Act, 1909. A Home Office expert was called in to prove that the film used was inflammable. However, the summonses were dismissed by the Jarrow Bench, with costs against the police, who subsequently appealed. W. H. Thompson, the London solicitor defending the case, was recently informed by the solicitor to the County Durham Police that the appeal is not to be proceeded with.

It would seem, therefore, that the authorities now accept the fact that the 16 mm. safety film is non-inflammable and therefore can be shown in public without special precautions.

THE WRITER'S APPROACH TO CINEMA

CAMPBELL NAIRNE

THE FILM student is not unnaturally contemptuous when he hears that Mr. X, the darling of the book guilds, has been engaged to prepare the "film transcript" or "screen treatment" of a novel. He suspects that in return for his sizeable cheque the distinguished man of letters will do no more than draft out a précis, cast in impeccably rounded sentences, or contribute the "additional dialogue" required to fill gaps left by condensation of the original. Scornfully he points out (remembering his Pudovkin) that the imagination of the literary artist is not trained to express its concepts in terms of plastic images; that the literary artist is not concerned with visuals—nor, it may be added, with sounds. The detailed preparation of the script, which is virtually the creative process, will of course be left to the professional scenarist and director, who are technically equipped (as the man of letters is not) for the job of translating words into sounds and images.

"The appeal to authors by which film producers every now and then try to curry favour with the intelligentsia is utterly absurd," writes Arnheim, and that is the attitude one expects to find among those who have convinced themselves that cinema can and must stand on its own legs. But there is a danger in this righteous scorn. It is apt to be inferred that the novelist, because he is a novelist and because words are his stock-in-trade, cannot, *ipso facto*, be a good scenarist or director.

That is probably a valid objection in the case of novelists who learned their craft at a time when the progenitor of the film fan was glueing his eye to the slot of Edison's kinetoscope. But does it hold in the case of younger novelists, those of the post-war generation? We had our rag picture-books, our illustrated primers in big type, and our bedtime stories, just like the children of an earlier generation, but we had also our Saturday matinees, and the "rainy" films we cheered wildly at the local picture palace opened a new door upon the world of adventure and make-believe. It was much better fun to watch these movies (though we deplored the close-up kisses) than to decipher the hyphenated words of a story book,

which was probably concerned anyhow with unreal characters, witches and ogres and so forth. Thus it came about that our juvenile appetite for fiction was satisfied to a very considerable extent by what we saw on the screen. And, unknown to us, the medium used to tell these stories—a succession of moving images broken now and then by titles which we either skipped or chanted in unison—was doing much to heighten our pictorial sense and develop our visual faculties.

The effect of this involuntarily acquired training is evident to-day in a large number of modern novels, and perhaps it could also be traced in work done in other media by artists whose childhood belongs to the period of the cinema's growth. G. W. Stonier notes* that writers have now a greater sense of the visual property of images, and that the film close-up, with its substitution of the part for the whole, has led to a rediscovery by writers of the *pars pro toto* device in fiction. Being film-minded, whether they like it or not, they are obviously more disposed to think in terms of plastic images when they turn to scenario writing than those veteran fiction writers whose names are at present most sought after to garnish credit titles.

The next generation of novelists is almost bound to bring an even more highly developed visual sense to the business of novel-writing. The school cinema is already established, and one foresees that within a few years the use of film for instructional purposes will no longer arouse controversy; it will be taken for granted, and film lessons will be part of all curricula. That is bound to have its effect. Nor is there likely to be any relaxation of the hold which the commercial cinema has on its child public. It is realized now that children's cinemas and programmes designed for children can be made paying propositions, so that the formative influence of the purely entertainment film will probably grow more and not less potent. Walt Disney is said to have usurped the place so long held by Hans Andersen, and it is a safe prediction that the boy who learns his fairy tales from the Silly Symphonies instead of from the printed page will have in maturity a feeling for line and colour which his less fortunate predecessors either did not possess or had to acquire by conscious effort.

It is still rare to find a novelist who can speak the scenarist's language, and in most cases, like the traditional Englishman in a foreign country, he makes no attempt to understand it. He continues to use his own language and is gratified by the readiness with which the complaisant scenarist meets him half-way. When, however, there is a measure of bi-lingualism—if I may carry the metaphor a stage further—the cinéaste will no longer be contemptuous

* "Gog Magog" Dent, 1933.

when he hears that Mr. X, the best-selling novelist, has been given a film contract. It is conceivable that the artist who understands both idioms may be faced with the problem of deciding in which to express himself.

Novel or film? Words or sounds and images? The choice of the novel is indicated at present by factors which have little to do with the validity of film as an art medium—the collectivism which makes it impossible for the artist to remain in full control of his material from first to last, the high cost of production, and so forth. Suppose, however, that such factors are ruled out. Is the film potentially a richer medium of expression than the novel? Is it subtle enough to express intellectual ideas? Could it stand the strain put upon the more flexible structure of the novel?

Two limitations deriving from the nature of the medium at once present themselves—the physical inability of the spectator to keep his receptive faculties unblunted for longer than (say) two hours; and the momentariness of film, which makes it essential that the significance of the moving image (reinforced it may be, by sound) should be instantaneously apprehended by the spectator.

Pudovkin, writing of the silent films, holds that a film more than 7000 feet long “already creates an unnecessary exhaustion.” With the introduction of sound-film demands have been made on the spectator’s ears as well as on his eyes, and there has been an intensification of the strain, with the natural result that films tend to be shorter. It is, of course, possible to issue a film in parts, as was done in the case of Fritz Lang’s *Nibelungs* and (recently) in the case of Raymond Bernard’s *Les Misérables*; but I am inclined to agree with Pudovkin that “the film of deeper content, the value of which lies always in the impression it creates as a whole, can certainly not be thus divided into parts for the spectator to see separately one each week.”

He is, however, surely unduly pessimistic when he maintains that “the influence of this limitation of film length is yet increased by the fact that the film technician, for the effective representation of a concept, requires considerably more material than, let us say, the novelist or playwright.” Words which contain a whole complex of images are not so easy to come by as Pudovkin imagines. The evocation of atmosphere in the first chapter of “The Return of the Native” is not achieved by the use of a few significant phrases. Hardy, major artist though he is, requires pages to get his effect. An artist of similar stature using film as his medium could evoke the desired atmosphere more economically and with no diminution of effect by his arrangement of half a dozen sensitively chosen images. If he had sound at his command he could describe Egdon Heath and bring home its significance by an even sparser use of his material.

Large numbers of words, it should be remembered, have got rubbed down, and the writer is driven to seek fresh metal in workings which grow ever deeper and deeper, so that he is in no small danger of losing himself altogether in the subterranean labyrinth—the fate that appears to have overtaken Joyce. Chaucer could write gaily that the grass was green, and leave it at that, sure of his effect; the modern writer must search after adjectives to express the degree of its viridity. Filmic images, on the other hand, are not yet old enough to have lost their virtue, and film, despite its unnaturally rapid growth, has still about it much of that morning freshness which the novel had when Chaucer was writing the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*—rightly regarded as the first English novel. Film is new and untried; in filmic images one can still say that the grass is green and get away with it. So much for Pudovkin's contention.

Limitations imposed by physical factors must, of course, be reckoned with in other media. Film is not uniquely disadvantaged. The composer, for example, must bear in mind that after a certain period of concentration the interest of the audience will flag because its receptive faculties are tired and can no longer respond with the same alertness. More serious is the limitation that arises from the basic quality of the film—its momentariness. Everything depends on the immediacy of the contact between the moving patterns and the spectator's receptive equipment. If something is missed he cannot go back and pick it up as he could if he were reading a novel. Moreover, if he feels that he has missed something he is left with a vague sense of irritation which tends to mar his enjoyment. It will also affect the intensity of his concentration, for his mind cannot respond fully to the stimuli of new impressions if it is partly engaged in searching back to discover what it was that the director intended to convey by such-and-such an image or sound.

The film artist who wishes to preserve unimpaired the spectator's responsiveness to his film is thus placed in a difficult position. If he uses an ideological idiom which is easily understood but somewhat banal—the spray of blossom, the bird on the bough, the moon breaking through clouds—he lays himself open to the criticism that he lacks imagination and is deficient in filmic ideas. But, on the other hand, it is useless to introduce images which even the trained film-goer will probably not understand without a longer period of concentration than can be afforded by the interval between their appearance and disappearance on the screen.

The quality of momentariness is not essential to literature (nor to sculpture and painting), and it is therefore possible to express in writing subtleties which the film artist must regretfully eliminate from his work. The first reading of a page of Joyce or Proust may not suffice to put the reader in touch with the writer's

mind, but subsequent readings should resolve most of the obscurities. If one has the proper equipment, the time to spare, and determination, one is bound sooner or later to force a way through the entanglements that defend the citadel, and once that is captured one finds that the spoil within is adequate compensation for the ardours of the attack. And so it is with painting and sculpture. (Music and the ballet suffer, though to a less extent, from the same disability as film.) One may look at Genesis and not immediately understand Epstein's intention. A Picasso still-life may at first glance appear a grotesque blob of colour. But after a period of concentration—and artistic enjoyment, as Arnheim reminds us, is not mere receptiveness—one begins to understand the particular approach of these artists, the peculiar quality of their vision.

The difficulty with film is that it allows no period of concentration. Nor is it often practicable to see a film more than once or twice. We can read a page of print fifty times, or pay fifty visits to an art gallery, but facilities for viewing a film over and over again are denied to all but a privileged minority.

Inevitably the conclusion is forced upon the novelist who would wish to express his concepts in film that it is by its very nature a medium incapable of being at once subtle and intelligible. That conclusion would be modified if one could feel that the human brain is likely in the process of evolution to develop further. However well disposed he may be to film, the novelist will continue to use the written word when he wishes to express the more subtle workings of his mind, unless in the course of time there is an acceleration of the process by which the brain decodes, co-ordinates and transmutes into emotional and intellectual responses the messages flashed to it via the telegraphy of the senses. Film would, among a race of supermen, be the ideal medium of artistic expression. But unfortunately we are not supermen.



A copy of *The Great Train Robbery*, generally regarded as the first story film to be produced, has been discovered in Glasgow. In the course of a lecture on the history of the cinema to the Scottish Educational Cinema Society, C. A. Oakley made a passing reference to the film and, at the close, a teacher in the audience remarked that he had in his possession a film dealing with a train robbery. Further investigation revealed that it was a copy of the early film which had been purchased many years previously from a photographic dealer in Cork and had lain undisturbed in a garret. The film has been handed over to the British Film Institute through the Scottish Film Council and it is understood that the intention is to have copies made which may be available to film societies. The film, a super in length in its time, is about 800 feet long. The present condition of the copy will not permit of its being projected without frequent breakages occurring.

THE FUNCTION OF THE ACTOR

RICHARD GRIFFITH

ALTHOUGH A decade has passed since the promulgation of the theory of montage, film critics still bow down before that revelation as to the final word on the technique of a medium not half a century old. The theory of creative editing of sound and picture, indisputably the basis of cinematic construction, has become enshrined in a holy remoteness where it cannot be reached by dialectic. Montage and montage alone, we have been told ever since the days of Kuleshov, is the significant act in the production of a film, and compared with it every other technical device is either unimportant or irrelevant to the purposes of cinema.

Because of the regrettable supremacy of the star system, acting has long been the target for the most rancorous attacks of the film theorists. Acting is for them the symbol of the cinema's extended bondage to the theatre, its use a confession of inadequate knowledge of film resources. One can understand this dislike, since acting once so far usurped the function of other methods as to threaten to make the camera a means for the mere reproduction of stage plays. When the *raison d'être* of a film is the glorification of its star's personality, montage becomes superfluous and the picture loses all significance as an example of cinema. But to attribute this distortion to acting itself rather than to the star system is to judge a device by its systematic misuse. This obvious fallacy, however, has entrapped most of the critics with whose work I am acquainted. There are only a few who have considered deeply this problem of acting.

Of these few I shall take Paul Rotha as representative. In "The Film till Now," Rotha has argued the question so persistently and thoughtfully as to convince a large number of cinéastes. He contends, first, that acting is unnecessary in the montage film, and, second, that when employed it destroys filmic reality. He would have the director use, in place of professionals, type actors who happen to be physically suitable to the characters they impersonate, but who are wholly under the control of the director in the characterization of their rôles.

Rotha's plan is no doubt the best for the documentary films he now directs. In them he deals with the problems of masses of people. But if a film is to be concentrated upon the behaviour of one or two individuals, it seems to me that the employment of type actors cannot be considered adequate. Rotha thinks that "the inner reality of the characters, their thoughts, desires, lusts, and emotions, is revealed by their outward actions. . . . The camera itself is unable to penetrate the world before it, but the creative mind of the director can reveal in his *selection* of the visual images this intrinsic essence of life by using the basic resources of the cinema, *viz.*, editing, angle, pictorial composition, suggestion, symbolism, etc." (*vide* "The Film till Now," p. 270). It will be seen that Rotha thinks that it is the relationship of images, and not so much the images themselves, which carries the content of a filmic theme, and I agree. But the fact of relationship does not depend wholly upon the juxtaposition of images; it surely lies somewhat in the meaning of the images themselves? If, then, the director presents an image whose meaning is conveyed by the gesture, movement, or facial expression of a character, is it not necessary that these be reproduced by an actor whose technical training and creative ability have taught him to understand the expression of human personality? No, says Rotha, for "the so-called symptomatic actions of Freud, the small, almost unnoticed and insignificant actions of behaviour on the part of a person, are highly indicative of the state of his mind, and are of the utmost value, when magnified on the screen, for establishing an understanding of that state of mind in the audience. For this reason alone, it will be seen how essential it is for a film player to be his natural self, and how detrimental theatrical acting is to film purposes. It is the duty of the *director* to reveal the natural characteristics of his players and to build these, by means of editing, into a filmic exposition of personality . . ." ("The Film till Now," pp. 270-271). I think that here Rotha is setting the director a superhuman task. He is saying that human beings reveal themselves by their unconscious actions, and that the director must by editing synthesize them into personality. So he must, but where is he to get the images he is to edit? We are told they cannot be reproduced by acting, so the director must then, in the manner of Dziga-Vertov, wait until a member of his cast happens to betray himself by a "symptomatic action" and quickly photograph it, if the subject happens to be within camera range. With such methods, every film would be as long in production as those of Abel Gance. It seems to me that, unless they are acted, these unconscious actions could never be caught by the camera unless by chance. And why can they not be acted? If they are observable at all they are also capable of being reproduced. Nor is it important that the reproduction is artificial.

It is with the symbolic meaning of an action, rather than with its actuality in life, that the film is concerned.

If it be granted that a director must employ a professional actor to reproduce gesture, facial expression, and movement when they are important to the meaning of the individual image, let us pass to Rotha's second objection. In making a distinction between the realities of stage and screen he quotes Pudovkin: "The film assembles the elements of reality to build from them a new reality proper to itself; and the laws of time and space that, in the sets and footage of the stage are fixed and fast, are in the film entirely altered." On the stage, that is, an event seems to occur in the same length of time it would occupy in life. The camera, however, only records the significant parts of the event, and so the filmic time is shorter than the real time of the event—or, if cross-reference or repetition for emphasis is necessary, it is longer. The introduction of the theatrical device of acting, says Rotha, brings real time into the film, and so destroys filmic reality. In saying this, he is assuming that if acting is employed the screen time of a particular image will be prolonged so that the acting of an incident may have its full effect. That is an underestimation of acting, which can be instantaneous or prolonged, depending upon the particular effect toward which it is directed. Acting does not vitiate montage. It is only where there is no creative editing that acting, deprived of the meaningful interrelation of images, must compensate for the deficiency by literal representation of the relationships which it is the function of montage to indicate. Rotha's criticism springs from his mistaken belief that all acting must be like that of the stage, where it carries the entire burden of visual representation. Cinematic acting is relieved of that burden, and can concentrate upon contributing to the effect of a particular image, which effect montage relates to the images that come before and after.

Indeed, I have yet to see a film in which untrained type actors have been used with any success in the portrayal of character. *Storm Over Asia* and *Tabu* have been upheld as examples of the triumph of montage, but I scarcely think anyone will contend that the characters in these otherwise excellent films were well set forth. To me they seemed bare of all personality, stripped down to the essential characteristics which all human beings possess in common. Pudovkin's *Mother*, an attempted study of a particular human relationship, created two formless, contradictory personalities whom it is difficult to remember a few months after seeing the film. Pudovkin apparently tried to make up for the deficiencies of his actors by expressing their characters through inanimate objects as much as possible. If it were feasible to build a personality by photographing symbolically all those objects which are intimately and

meaningfully connected with him, then the problem of acting would be somewhat sensationally solved. But once let the director include a shot in which the character himself appears and it becomes necessary to represent the mannerisms of that character with careful attention to detail. The screen magnifies details. The representation of them cannot be left to an unskilled actor.

There remains one practical objection to cinematic acting with which we have not dealt. Granting that in a subordinate position acting legitimately contributes to the film, say its opponents, will any actor worthy of employment consent to such a subordination? Will he agree to give up his pre-eminent position to become the mere tool of the director—a tool whose sole use is to realize individual effects in scattered shots? I think that he will, if he has any understanding of cinematic mechanism. I have already distinguished between the film which deals with humanity in mass and that which portrays the personality of an individual. In the first there is no need for trained acting. In the second, however, an actor of experience and ability must be employed. And naturally the director will not call upon him to act out a single scene without explaining its relation to those which precede and follow. No, the director and the player will work out a harmonious conception of the character, embody it in the scenario, and the actor will realize his portion of the concept under the director's supervision. This is Pabst's method, and I cannot see why the conjunction of two creators, one supreme and one subordinate, should present any insuperable difficulty.



FRENCH EPIC-MAKING SATIRISED. Under cover of satire, Paul Morand protestingly reviews contemporary conditions in the French film industry in "The Epic-Makers" (7s. 6d. Lovat Dickson). He suggests in an introduction that in revealing "the wild-cat finance, the fantastic hotch-potch of nationalities, the preposterous sentiments and ridicule of every French institution," he is understating rather than enlarging the truth; and if we take him at his word, all cannot be well in the French film industry. Financial irresponsibility and a motley of nationalities are, of course, conditions not peculiar to the film colony of any one country; but it appears from M. Morand's account that in France at present the industry is largely in the hands of Central Europeans, Levantines and other foreign sharks, characterised in general by illiteracy. And M. Morand anxiously asks that "Frenchmen may be given a place, be it a small one, in the 'national' film industry." His satire is brisk and bristling and, like that in *Once in a Lifetime*, will not appear at all fantastic to those who know even a little of movie methods.

THE ARTIST AND THE FILM

ARTHUR SHEARSBY

UP TO the present, the contribution which modern art has made to the cinema has been practically negligible. With the exception of the Walt Disney cartoons, and all the trivial accessories of modernity in the shape of decoration and furnishing, the film, from the purely pictorial point of view, is very much in the position of the art of some seventy years ago. Neither modern clothes nor modern gags, helped out by the feeble imitations of Gauguin or the emasculated examples of Archipenko which adorn film interiors, can hide the essential poverty and deprivation which the cinema has suffered in its ruthless exclusion of the artist from its making.

With it all, this rigorous concentration of the film in the hands of commercially minded business men, it still remains a truism that the artist, and the artist alone, is the one person capable of transforming the howling, lusty incontinences of present-day cinema into the terms of a real art. The film is so peculiarly his medium, from the visual point of view. It offers him the means of bringing to life those special qualities of plastic form and conception, that sensibility to design, which are outwith the scope of stage presentation.

There are undisputed angles of the cinema from which the artist should be properly excluded, except in his photographic capacity. Drama, in its essential meaning of the presentation of human destiny by means of the individual, will always stand or fall by the fundamental purpose which gives it life, but there are still many, and much-neglected ways, in which the artist can bring an almost wholly-original offering to the screen.

Something of what may ultimately be accomplished can be glimpsed from the Disney cartoons, and, more recently, the French production, *Joie de Vivre*. Here we see the imagination of the painter at work in his own particular medium, the creation of significant form, divorced from the actual world of reality.

It would be rather futile to dispute at this date, in view of the vast popularity of Mickey Mouse, the immense influence which a

mere pictorial symbol can have on the imagination of the people. Mickey is a star of the first magnitude, a creature of fantasy, who can yet exercise an appeal denied to all but the greatest of actors. The *Joie de Vivre* cartoon, unsatisfactory as it is in many ways, is a still more cogent illustration of the effect which an abstract symbol can have on the imagination. A purely pictorial production, divorced from any attribute of the human, it yet manages to convey a wealth of strange and fundamental meaning.

A new approach, of course, would be needed on the part of directors if the modern experiments in the visual arts were to be properly incorporated into the film. The commercial Caliph, with his florid imagination, and entire lack of visual perception, would have to give way to the man who could weave the tragi-comedy of life out of the inter-relationship of masses and planes, of form, and eventually, colour.

A good deal of substantial support may be advanced for the belief that abstract cinematic art, when it comes, will be able to exert quite as catholic an appeal as the realistic drama of the present day. There is as vast a scope, within its symbolic bounds, as has been shown to exist between the blood-and-thunder crudities of melodrama and the more rare and subtle revelations of the higher drama. The intelligence of the film-going public is not the negligible factor which directors would have us believe. The average film at the present time is definitely created for the rapturous attentions of the adolescent, but there is no basis for the belief that the whole of the cinema-loving public is in a state of juvenility.

Certainly to the more mature in mind, abstract art, if allowed free access to the cinema, would have a tremendous appeal, and it is here that the fallacy of technique must be exposed. Technique is not, and never will be, art. Technique is applied thought, not creative thought, and it is creative thought which is so badly needed in the cinema of the present day. Technique can use the machine for all it is worth, but it cannot supply it with the life-giving material which is its real source of vitality.

The technical resources are all at hand, however. Only the necessary imagination is lacking, coupled with the type of mind which knows what it wants, and is determined to get it. It must, again, be the kind of imagination which can work in masses and planes, and visualize in the new medium.

Let us, for the sake of illustration, try to demonstrate how modern experimental art may help the cinema by the use of human material. Suppose we begin with a two-reel drama of the Edgar Allan Poe type, or the creation of a film round the story of H. G. Wells' "Invisible Man"?

The essential charm of such stories lies in their element of

pure fantasy. They have little relationship to flesh-and-blood realities, but are definite creations of the imagination. If an actor appeared (as inevitably he would) in such a grotesque or imaginative film, with an ordinary make-up, and surrounded by the paraphernalia of the star system, all sense of fantasy would be dispelled, for the essence of fantasy lies, as has been said, in its separation from the everyday world, and actors (being what they are) are very much of the world of every day. The illusion would have vanished, and it is here that modern art can come to the aid of naturalism.

Masks are the finest symbols obtainable for the elimination of the human, and the deeper conveyance of a sense of the unreal, and should be used extensively in experimental films. Light and shadow must also play a very important part, and an intelligent use of symbolic backgrounds, such as those of Miro, would be of invaluable help. Gesture and movement are of primary artistic importance, and only the actor who could express himself throughout the medium of his whole body could be utilized. The significance achieved by such mime has already been seen at its best in the Ballets Russes productions of "Choreartium" and "Les Presages."

The entire film need not be pure mime, but all talk would have to be incorporated into the movement, and not allowed to escape as an individual aberration from the complete design. Music and sound effects could be made by illusion to emanate from various points of the action. The endeavour would be, in other words, to generalize speech effects, and localize music and sound effects, using all such as definite accent notes, but not obtrusive attractions. Tremendous use could be made of the revolving light and wheel, and it would be expedient to employ an inclined stage of perhaps one in eight or one in ten. The essential purpose behind all such abstraction of the human would not be the elimination of the flesh-and-blood actor, as such, but the attempted intensification of symbolic effect.

The Greek play is perhaps a convincing illustration of the whole theme. We all know how the orthodox cinema would tackle such a play, and yet the essential quality in a Greek play is precisely this absence from naturalism. Its beauty is an elusive one of the spirit and the mind, and it is in this world of inner significances that the experimental cinema, with a developed capacity for fantasy, will perhaps find its widest scope.

The naturalistic play has its unquestionable place in the life of cinematic art. It presents the human problem in a comprehensible form to the mass of the people. Its appeal rests primarily on the personality of the actor, and the authenticity of the emotions he is interpreting, but the experimental cinema has the unique oppor-

tunity, if it so wills, of wandering into the rarer atmosphere of intensified life and thought, by means of abstract symbols. In such a world the actors themselves would be transformed into works of art, fitting as an integral part into the whole design. The abilities of the modern scenic painter, and not those of the mere property man, would be utilized, and the composer and writer would all bring their indispensable talents to the creation of such a real work of art. In the realm of painting, Surrealism could be employed for cinematic backgrounds, with its strange rendering of the things of the subconscious mind, its visualised thought.

The actors, in such a setting, would take on some of the mysterious, dream-like quality of the creations of Miro, Chirico, Fritz Van Den Berghe, Tchelitchev, or Edouard Goerg. They could move to the rhythm of such music as inspired the symphonic ballet, "Choreartium." The spoken word, when employed, should be free from definite accent, and used with tonal understanding and sympathy.

In the use of masks, it should be realized that they are not the funny things habitually used for the mediocre interpretation of comedy and tragedy, or, more commonly, on the fifth of November, but symbols of great artistic and æsthetic power, having been used in all ages and by all peoples to intensify the inner meaning of life.

To the inevitable complaint of the impossibility of such a cinema, there can be pointed, at the present time, the slender actualities of Disney and the Hoppin and Gross cartoon. Disney, although as yet in the illustrative stage, has pointed the way. If he could contrive to emerge from the comic-paper attitude to things, charming as it undoubtedly is, into the interpretation of ideas, he could be the greatest force on the screen. Certainly he has the necessary sense of the macabre and fantastic.

If it be advanced that the pictorially experimental cinema would have no public beyond the hysterical vapourings of the clique or the coterie, it can be replied that this possibility would all depend on the method of approach and the genuineness of the final effect. Certainly, at the present day, there is a growing unrest with the orthodox cinema, largely amongst its "middle-brow" patrons. It neither affords them the solid, three-dimensional satisfactions of the theatre, nor the unreal, imaginative appeal which modern pictorial art could bring to the screen. It is a half-way house, in which both mediums effect a sterile compromise. If it is to live at all as an integral part of the cultural life of the people it must, on the one hand, raise the naturalistic film into a real association with life, and, on the other, employ the resources of pictorial art, with its peculiar aptitude for the medium, to intensify the life of the imagination.



Heinrich George in a new Ufa
film, "Joan the Maid."
Direction: Gustav Ucicky.
Photography: Gunther Krampf.



From
Alexandrov's
"Jazz Comedy,"
a Souyoskino
production.



From "Chapayev,"
a Lenfilm production
based on authentic
material of the
Civil War in
Turkistan in 1919.
Scenario and
direction:
the Brothers Vassilev.

Courtesy of Marie Seton.

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET CINEMA

MARIE SETON

THE RECENT Moscow Cinema Conference and the subsequent discussion made it quite obvious that the Soviet cinema has entered upon a new phase of its development. For four years there has been a crisis among the cinema artists, brought about by the transitional conditions of the Soviet Union itself. They failed time and again to find and reveal the spirit of the time before that spirit had evolved into something different. They were frightened of contradictions. More often than not the problems raised in the films were out of date before the pictures were released, or the theme of the pictures muddled because the scenarios had been given a fresh twist half-way through. For example, the last sequence of Pudovkin's *Deserter*—the unemployed's encounter with the police—was originally in the second reel. During 1934, however, coinciding with the increased stability of Soviet life, the film industry got "out of the wood" and produced several pictures with interesting new trends, and one, *Chapayev*, which can rank beside *Potemkin* and *Mother* as characteristic of its period.

The three days conference served to clear the air by giving public expression, not to say official status, to a number of thoughts which were in the process of turning into facts. It also gave the second generation of directors and the less known cinema artists an opportunity to formulate their theories, which were more often than not in opposition to those of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko. They in turn modified or threw out a number of their theories, essential in their day, which had been hitherto generally accepted as characteristic of Soviet film. For example, the subordinate position of the professional actor which characterized the work of Pudovkin, and the subordination of the individual character to the mass which was a corner stone of Eisenstein's scenarios.

The most constructive element of the conference was the frankness with which all expressed themselves. Directors from the national minority republics like Georgia did not hesitate to say that they were too often considered as provincials by the Moscow artists;

actors to assert that their suggestions and opinions were arrogantly swept aside by directors; and Leningrad artists to maintain that the Moscow studios were badly organized, supercilious in tone and blandly indifferent to the welfare of the students graduating from the State Institute of Cinematography. For three days criticism raged fast and furious.

The most destructive element of the conference was that under the guise of criticism there was a deal of backbiting, particularly on the part of the second generation of directors, who often showed themselves intolerant, arrogant and ungrateful towards the pioneer directors who, during an epoch of ruined economy, had raised a number of basically important theoretical signposts. That the newcomers should criticise and revise the early theories of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko, shows the virility with which they come to the cinema; but when several young directors of talent unlit by genius began to belittle Eisenstein and Pudovkin with personally rude quotations from Gogol and Georges Sand, and set themselves up as inquisitors, then they showed themselves to be suffering from a disease known in revolutionary circles as Marxian measles. By contrast the Communist Party representative, Dinamov, belittled no one and showed a much more profound understanding of the creative artist's psychology than some of the budding geniuses showed towards each other. His speech can be summarized in the words of Marx, "that all emancipation leads back to the human world, to relationships, to men themselves." Therefore, the main tasks of the Soviet cinema artists in 1935 are:—

(1) To reinstate Beauty.

The beauty which emerges from ideas and not from single sequences, beautiful in themselves but related only as illustrations to the theme or as symbols of ideas.

(2) For artists to feel the epoch in their blood—as Eisenstein and Pudovkin felt it when they made *Potemkin* and *Mother*, for "the voice of the epoch must ring in the voice of the hero."

(3) The hero to be unafraid of burning passions.

In order that the Soviet cinema may have this passion the directors (as has not always been the case) must only take those subjects with which they are in love. They must take root in the subject as trees take root in the soil.

(4) To create individual characters.

People with real and often contradictory natures, not puppets in black-and-white pulled by the string of ideas stated but not analysed. Contradictions in life and in people must be seen and understood; and above all the enemy, like the hero, must be shown in the round.

(5) To create actors with great passions, to portray such

characters so that they live; for, said Dinamov, "you cannot base your cinema entirely on the use of natural types, any more than it can be wholly a documentary cinema."

(6) To have a subject in every picture, for the mass has its subjects and its leaders. *Mother*, *Storm Over Asia* and *Chapeyev* are the main line of the Soviet film; in them there are heroes through whom the action as thought and the thought as action is manifested.

(7) To create heroes who must think so that their thoughts reach the public.

(8) To create heroes who must feel, otherwise the subject will remain incomplete. Moreover, characters must have main emotions, for "an eagle could not fly with a host of little wings."

None of these problems can be solved without

(9) a clear style and a perfect technique.

It is not quantity, but quality that counts. "In the Golden Age of Greece the statues were of normal size; only in an age of decay did quantity replace quality. Style is the artist's hand-writing"—and the Soviet cinema has many styles and theories: Eisenstein's the intellectual, Dovzhenko's the poetic, Pudovkin's the passionate and emotional.

(10) The final problem of the film workers is to remake cinema consciousness. The struggle is not so much a fight against different theories as to create a definite and positive new style. In fact, an ever-evolving and developing style.

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The only film which has shown a mature development of many of these new trends is *Chapeyev*, the first sound picture of two brothers Vassilev. They adapted the scenario from the book by Furmanov with the use of historical records.

Chapeyev is the only recent Soviet film with any large comprehension of men as they are in life. Its beauty will last because it is not "fashionable" in its thought or its treatment. It is full of the spirit by which an epoch can be seriously judged. It is not like *Nights of St. Petersburg* or *Storm*, pictures which show a revival of interest in the classical and the beautiful; or *The Jolly Boys* (*Jazz Comedy*), which is full of formal beauty that degenerates often into the pretty-pretty. Though the theme of *Chapeyev*, the struggle of a small detachment of revolutionary soldiers under the command of Chapeyev, is a page from early Soviet history recorded in a novel by Chapeyev's actual commissar, Furmanov, the characters and events are essentially seen through the eyes of 1934-35. Had Eisenstein or Pudovkin taken this theme in 1925, instead of *Potemkin* and *Mother*, they would in their separate methods have treated it as an heroic mass drama of civil war, ending in the death of all concerned. Made to-day it is an analysis of character, the political

character of the battle and the psychological character of a small group of soldiers who, because of their thoughts and emotions, represent the masses.

Chapeyev is a more personally passionate film than any made before. Tenderness and love and humour, a really delicious humour, are as integral elements of the story as its courage and heroism; they are the form through which life is expressed as opposed to certain and oncoming death. The theme depends entirely upon character. There is nothing symbolic about the six or eight leading characters, soldiers, peasants and a woman talking backchat, singing, loving and fighting to the death. There is nothing conventionally heroic about the hero, Chapeyev, cursing, throwing chairs about, puzzled; at first politically illiterate. Some peasants ask him whether he is a Communist or a Bolshevik; he scratches his head, not knowing what they mean, and answers, "I'm an internationalist." Even the White officer is human; he loves Chopin, he is never grotesque, he is an enemy to respect.

Chapeyev is undoubtedly as much the actors' as it is the directors' picture; and that is a new development in the history of Soviet films. Babotchkin's portrayal of Chapeyev is an amazing piece of work, a beautiful performance. He has through intensive research wormed his way into the commander's skin. Without such a performance *Chapeyev* would be nothing, for the main subject is how Chapeyev and his men think and feel and accordingly act in a number of historical events. Theirs is an optimistic tragedy.

The style of the picture is synthetic. The synthesis of the great early films tempered with the more personal elements which were first manifested in 1932 in Ermmler's and Utkevitche's *Counterplan*. It is much quieter in rhythm than the early pictures; it has few tricks either of photography or montage. There is a certain amount of symbolism all through the film, introduced through several well-known folk songs; for example, towards the end Chapeyev sings the eighteenth-century song of the Decemberists, "Ermerk," which tells the tale of the conqueror of Siberia, who is drowned as he tries to swim the river. It suggests and anticipates Chapeyev's own fate. But on the whole the subject is more revolutionary than the form, or rather, the treatment of the subject is more important than the technique employed when estimating the value of *Chapeyev* in the historical development of the Soviet cinema.

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION is from the new Ufa film *Abel mit der Mundharmonika*, directed by Max Pfeiffer and featuring Karl Ludwig Schreiber.



René Deltgen in Germany's
new version of the life
of Joan of Arc.
Scenario: Gerhard Menzel.



Paul Robeson and Nina Mae McKinney in "Sanders of the River," a London Films production based on the Edgar Wallace stories of Commissioner Sanders. Direction: Zoltan Korda.

SWEDEN

DURING 1934 the Swedish film industry entered upon a new phase of production activity and a determined effort is being made to meet the competition of foreign produced films in the home market. There is, on the one hand, an endeavour to produce fine films comparable to those of the great days of the Swedish cinema, and on the other an attempt to shut out all inferior foreign pictures. Sweden has no quota system, and the proportion of Swedish to foreign pictures shown depends entirely on the power of the former to compete in the home market.

Sweden is a country with a reputation for quality in industry, and just as other Swedish industries owe the high standard of their products to the skill of their craftsmen, so the film industry has at its disposal a company of highly skilled technicians. In addition to the experienced producers, there is growing up a generation of younger artists who, untrained in routine, have imagination and enthusiasm in abundance.

During 1934 Sweden for the first time took part in international film contests, being represented at both Vienna and Venice. At Vienna the Swedish film *En Stilla Flirt* (*A Mild Flirt*) won a first prize. Gustav Molander, its producer, is one of the oldest and most reliable artists in the Swedish cinema. He received his early schooling in the glorious epoch of Sweden's silent films when he worked as assistant to, among others, Victor Sjöström. In particular the technique of his film is notable. The photography is by Ake Dahlquist, foremost among Swedish cameramen, who will be remembered for his work in *En Natt*, also produced by Molander.

A Mild Flirt has been a great success in Sweden. In spite of the fact that Sweden is the native country of Greta Garbo, a good Swedish film is generally a greater commercial success than a Garbo film. In *A Mild Flirt* the principal part was taken by Tutta Rolf, who, early this year, left for Hollywood, where she is under contract with Fox.

The Swedish Film Association, Svenska Filmsamfundet, was founded in 1933, and last year had the task of awarding its prize medal for the first time. It was given to one of the year's greatest commercial successes, *Karl Fredrik Regerar*. This is the story of a Swedish agricultural workman who attains a high position in the Government, and it has a recognisable parallel in modern Swedish

politics. A medal was awarded to Sigurd Wallen for his rendering of the role of Karl Fredrik.

In addition to his strenuous work as director of his theatre and as an actor, Gosta Ekman has found time for three film performances. The chief of these is the title role in *Swedenhielm*, from the play by the Swedish author, Hjalmar Bergman. It is a story of a scientist who, after many disappointments, at last wins the Nobel Prize; and it gives illuminating expression to the characteristic national qualities of the Swede—honesty, simplicity, faithfulness and stubbornness. The other two films in which Gosta Ekman has appeared are farcical comedies and, chiefly because of his contribution, have become great successes.

Swedish cinema has three young producers who, during the past year, have made good with original films. The youngest of them is Lorens Narmstedt, who made *The Atlantic Adventure*. Per-Axel Branner, the second of the young directors, suddenly broke off a stage career in order to make films. His *Young Hearts* is the story of a group of girls of about sixteen years of age brought together from different parts of the country to spend the summer in a country rectory for their confirmation—young people with sensitive minds, susceptible to trifles, but with growing spirit and developing initiative. Branner has made a few other films, including a new version of *The Song of the Flame Red Flower*, from the novel of the Finnish author, Johannes Linnankoski. About ten years ago Mauritz Stiller made a picture on the same theme which was an international success. The new version may not have the same success, but it has much of the quality which made Stiller's film outstanding. Branner is a versatile director of great promise. The third of these promising new directors is Ivar Johansson. He prefers to produce his films in surroundings full of strength and grandeur: the wild rivers and sweeping valleys of the north of Sweden, as in *Hälsingar*; or the outmost barren islands of the archipelago, swept by wind and wave, as in *Surfs*. His characters live, and are one with their surroundings, and the conflicts grow up out of the *milieu* in a way that is not common in films. He sketches in the landscape and its people with broad powerful strokes, and his characters have space and horizon behind them.

These are the most important of the thirty pictures which Sweden has produced during the past eighteen months. Other films have been comedies intended for popular consumption. Serious work in other spheres has not been lacking, however. Prince Wilhelm, author of a number of plays and travel books, has produced a full-length film about the lighthouse people of the west coast, and also several short films for which he has supplied the commentary. An increasing interest is being taken in short films, and the leading

producing company has a special department for them, with four directors. Sweden is beginning to understand the value and importance of the documentary film.

RAGNAR ALLBERG.

AMERICA

THE SHEEN of the surface photography gets slicker, light glances off the edge of polished surfaces like star-bursts, there is a steel-edged sharpness to the black-and-white magic of what a ten-thousand-dollar Mitchell sound camera can do—and ground noises have been eliminated from the sound so that technically one might say that the American movie is flawless.

But one does not say that because the emotional content remains as sterile as ever. One cannot forgive this vacuity of ideas for the devastating sleekness of the mechanics of photography and sound. The critics have sung the praises of Vidor's *The Wedding Night*, which had the novelty of the Connecticut tobacco fields as a setting but little else. Otherwise it is the old triangle, with a primitive base and a sharp apex lifted by the gargantuan stature of Gary Cooper, a good actor. Anna Sten hasn't done anything in Hollywood to approach her performance in *Brothers Karamazov*. The last "touch" in *The Wedding Night* is true Vidor and good Vidor. In *Our Daily Bread* the intention is more laudable than the execution of it. For one thing, Vidor must have looked too long at *Turksib*. What good is a social document if you are going to drag in such well-worn dramatic clichés as the tough guy who gives himself up so that the reward money can be used to further the co-operative farm? And why the fuzzy-haired blonde to vamp the husband away from the faithful and serving wife and thereby jeopardize the success of the co-operative by luring away the farm's organizer? A co-operative farm has real problems to meet—they concern Government or State subsidies, united front of workers and farmers, soil, seed, irrigation and the economic system which will or will not allow it to function. What is this nonsense about blondes and mock-heroics? The one fine shot of a little globe of water spurting up from the earth around the tender shoot—as lyrical as Pudovkin at his best—should have shown Vidor the true forte of the film. Yet *Our Daily Bread* made my companion cry, and was awarded a gold medal by I.C.E. Maybe it doesn't take much (along such a "daring" line of thought, *i.e.* that the soil is the mother of man, and that man should return to it to reclaim his living and his self-respect) to touch a world sated with artificialities. But the picture is a failure at the box-office in America. The mass of people prefer to be numbed with the narcotic of the trivial average Hollywood film. A film like *Our Daily*

Bread brings them too close to the harsh reality of their own lives. That's not what movies are for, for them.

Movies are for Jean Harlow and William Powell in *Reckless*. Based on a recent newspaper scandal of a Broadway torch-singer who married a millionaire playboy, who died soon after the marriage, mysteriously, too, they say. She was never accepted by his snooty family, and when her child was born there was a long battle in the courts for the custody of the child, and finally she repudiated a million-dollar settlement so she could have the child, and went back to Broadway. The film version of this delightful pastiche is as brittle as a pane of glass, and as transparent. Also, as emotional. Harlow finally sets her critics right that she can't act. The dialogue is pompous and recited, and one longs for a time-out period when the director would have allowed at least some of the notorious Harlow sex appeal to creep in, even if it meant discarding the story into the ash-can where it belongs. But it will make a fortune.

The sputtering of Frank Morgan in *Naughty Marietta* makes that film tolerable for the few comic moments when he is on—otherwise it is a beautiful bore. *Star at Midnight* is a third carbon copy of *The Thin Man* (a good mystery film—but lamentably destined to be the first of a new series of wisecracking whodunit pictures). *Sequoia* has a few good animal shots but much too much insupportable poutings by Jean Parker, who plays a wild, untamed girl of America's great outdoors. Slopping up Nature with a lot of S.P.C.A. goo. Only when the proximity of the actors to the animals has been removed does something of the nobility of the deer and the puma seep through. Otherwise it's a film for Boy Scouts.

The foreign film situation in America is all Britain. One Soviet film, *Chapayev*, was a success in New York. (The new Kozintsev-Trauberg picture, *Youth of Maxim*, has just opened.) Among French films, only Yvonne Printemps' lavender and old lace version of *Camille* was successful, and that only in New York. *La Maternelle* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* are fighting with the ubiquitous censors for their lives. Fritz Lang's *Liliom* was a failure here. But Gaumont-British and London Films are spreading all over the country, and two films of Gaumont's, *The Iron Duke* and *Unfinished Symphony*, and London Films' *Scarlet Pimpernel* have been very successful. So were *Chu Chin Chow* and *Power* (*Jew Süss*). And others. It's an "invasion by the red-coats" all over again, the American distributors are saying. Britain retaliating for 1776 and 1812. G.-B. and London Films may yet do it. Their forthcoming schedules will give Hollywood no little competition, and Hollywood is blithely stepping right into it by loaning out its players, writers, etc., for G.-B. and London Films.

Britain is more favourably situated, with regard to America and the world market, than ever before. If she makes the most of it, not

only will she have usurped Germany's former first place as a laboratory of the cinema, but she will split up the world monopoly no longer so impregnably held by the moguls of Hollywood.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG.

GERMANY

"AT LAST the moment has arrived when the Reichs Government is in a position to play a vigorous part in assisting the development of the German film industry, by making definite contributions of an intellectual, economic and material nature." This was the message Dr. Goebbels delivered at the inauguration of the Reichs Film Archives, which has been formed for the preservation of specimens of all the great films ever produced in Germany.

"Before the end of this year," said Dr. Goebbels, "five films of undeniable classical status, representative of German film art at its best, will be on display. They are now in preparation. And the Government will see to it that the producers will be spared undue worry concerning the expenditure of time and money.

"Already the Government has gone a long way to prepare a better future for the film industry, and has provided a material basis to work from, as, for instance, through the establishment of the Film Bank, the relaxation of the censorship, the creation of the Reichs Institute of Film Drama, and finally through the award of the Reichs Film prize to stimulate and encourage creative and artistic achievement."

Dr. Goebbels assured his hearers that he had "not the slightest intention" of tutoring the producers nor of hampering their freedom in any direction. "No artist," he said, "can work under the lash of a taskmaster."

Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig, famous for the creation of the architectural splendour of many early German films, will be responsible for the settings of *Amphitryon*, now being produced by Ufa at Neubabelsberg. Reinhold Schunzel will direct, from his own scenario. Fritz Arno Wagner is camera-man, and the music has been written by Franz Doelle.

Gustav Ucicky has directed *Joan of Arc*, from a scenario by the poet Gerhard Menzel. The photography is by Gunther Krampf, and Röhrig and Herlth are again responsible for the settings, which are conceived on a vast scale.

German and French versions are to be made of the musical feature, *Make Me Happy*, which Arthur Robison is directing. The music is by Theo Mackeben.

Pola Negri takes the principal part in *Mazurka*, a Cine-Allianz production directed by Willi Forst.

THE SCENARIO

MAY I be allowed to comment on your editorial in the last issue dealing with the scenario of *The Private Life of Henry VIII*? This gives me an opportunity to hit out at your brave *Quarterly* in a manner befitting its policy, which is belligerent and stimulating.

My cardinal sin, according to your gospel, is that I deny any knowledge of the meaning of "true cinema." But in the introduction to *Henry VIII* I took the precaution of adding "whatever that is," and I regret to say that your editorial does not take us any further in the way of a definition. Indeed, no. It merely tells us that film form is a pattern laid up in Heaven, like Plato's "Republic," and that we are as far from it to-day, with perhaps two exceptions—Chaplin and Clair—as ever we were.

You say that if the scenarist produces something on paper which is afterwards re-created in celluloid, he is being denied his "rightful recognition as progenitor of the production," or that the director, alternatively, is being given credit for creative gifts to which he is not entitled. I contend that, in the present state of cinema, that is the most abysmal nonsense. This is not a question of credits—and Heaven knows enough people gain credit for doing nothing at all—but of the first principle of film form. Not many principles, but one principle, which is this: that the content and pattern of the film are determined by the idea, and that the originator of that idea is, *ipso facto*, the creator of the film.

In our muddled and unformed cinema, for which no one has yet succeeded in establishing any principles, as Aristotle did for the drama, the idea is at present contained in the scenario. I do not claim any special eminence for the scenario, and as a basis for a non-literary affair like a picture I stated plainly enough in my introduction that it was suspect. And so it is, and will be for many years to come, till a director can read a script as a musician reads a score.

But can you hazard a guess when films will be the single, individual creation of one person? Would criticism be worth a rap which totally ignored present conditions, namely, the organised regimentation of many talents, and proceeded on the assumption that, unless one artist were the only begetter, the film was a failure, was not worthy of serious attention?

Shakespeare is regarded as no less an artist because he borrowed from Plutarch, and Sterne is no less a wit because he stole from Burton. In fact, you are hopelessly old-fashioned if you suppose that a work of art is only perfect if it is conceived and carried out by one individual mind. Of course, it *may* be. Negro and Aztec art shows that it was, and how perfect it was.

But in the cinema we are still primitives, when one man is as good as another in practice or criticism. And in your passion for technical rectitude you seem to have missed the point of my scenario series altogether, just as a critic can go on talking till he is blue in the face about filmic form or "expressive sound" and still tell you nothing whatever about the film, what happened in the film, what was its intention, what beauties it presented, what knowledge it showed, and so forth. (And parenthetically, can you tell me of any sound which is not "expressive"?)

You say that without an architect to inspire the draughtsmen and instruct the builders, a building would lack æsthetic harmony. That is true. But who is the architect of a film if he is not the scenarist, and that being so, why should he not be given his rightful importance in the filmic scheme?

I come to the rescue of this neglected species and a damaging lump of Edinburgh rock is flung at me by *Cinema Quarterly*. I deal with what is instead of what will be, and I am a traitor to the best in cinema. You say it is "idle to talk of the scenario as having significance," and yet, in Mack Schwab's interesting article on Chaplin, in the same issue, he writes: "His (Chaplin's) script is completely worked out, key-shot by key-shot."

Inevitably. It is sheer academicism to suppose that Chaplin, any more than Beethoven, carries everything in his head on the score that, all being visual, or all being harmonics, no scheme of notation is necessary. On the contrary, *that* is the significant thing, the ground-plan, the foundation, the idea rising in imagination from the page.

However, this must be intensely boring to your readers, and I must not inflict myself on them. But are you sure that in the severe cold of actual practice your many theories would stand the test? I myself have had a long apprenticeship in critical theory of films, and have stated them in papers not unworthy to be placed side by side with *Cinema Quarterly*, and yet I distrust a great deal of what I said, and marvel that I was so distant from reality. And I question profoundly whether the "full creative control" you demand of directors is not just a pattern laid up in Edinburgh, for students, scholars and watchers in the skies, and not for the striving mortal in the studio fighting the devils of light, sound and mischance.

ERNEST BETTS.

INDIA ON THE SCREEN

INDIA having taken the place of gunmen on the screen, the inevitable question is being asked. The word Art is being whispered, though God forbade that it should ever be applied to the gunmen sequence. But India . . . atmosphere . . . Flaherty has gone out to spend a year or two photographing large chunks of atmosphere.

It is unfair to generalize. Films that strive to be instructive ought not to be compared with those that are made solely for diversion. Both *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* and *Clive of India* are in the latter category, though they mark an advance from the crude *Son of India* of Ramon Novarro and the terrible early Kiplings.

If you attempt to make an analysis, you will find that *Bengal Lancer* is really a Wild West picture in an Indian setting—a minimum of Indian setting, for the North-West Frontier is nothing more than the hills of Hollywood with Gary Cooper and Aubrey Smith capering about them. It forms superb entertainment.

Clive of India is essentially domestic—a love story—though, coming after *Bengal Lancer*, it was expected that the conqueror of India should never leave his elephant unless it were to blow up half India. Not one second of that picture was made in India. It was purely diversional. The atmosphere was an effect.

Flaherty's methods are different. He gives you the real thing. Generally in immense slabs. As an instruction, it is of value. He contrives also to make of it a work of art. But to attempt to combine it with a story would be to court disaster. I prefer the simple devices of a Chaplin. Thirteen years ago, when he made *A Woman of Paris*, Charlie Chaplin showed us a girl waiting for a train. The train came in. He did not show us the charging, tearing express; but only the flicker of lights from the carriage windows on the girl's anxious face—firstly rapidly, then slowly, until the train stopped. "I did that with a piece of cardboard," he told me.

This will have to be borne in mind when *Kim* comes to be made. Irving Thalberg discussed it with me when I was in Hollywood. He wanted me to stay on and tackle it; but, alas! my other engagements did not permit this. When, however, it is undertaken, it will have to be decided whether the atmosphere or the story is of greater consequence on the screen: the two cannot be combined as effectively in this new medium as they are in the book. Essentially, it is an atmosphere book. But there is a story, and if a diversional film is to be made, the atmosphere will have to be relegated to effects.

There is happily a public—a very large public—for both types of film, as the astounding and deserved success of such a production as *Forgotten Men* shows. There we had a neatly assembled jig-saw of



Fritz Kortner as
Abdul Hamid in
"Abdul the Damned."
Production: B.I.P.
Direction: Karl Grune.

Fred Barnard's illustration of
Mr Micawber in an early
edition of
"David Copperfield,"
with a still of W. C. Fields
as the same character from
the M.-G.-M. film.
The character studies suggest
"an animation of the original
magazine engravings"—
Campbell Nairne.





Cicely Courtneidge in
"Me and Marlborough,"
a new historical film
being completed by
Gaumont-British at
Shepherd's Bush.
Direction: Victor Saville.

war atmosphere, cemented together by the reminiscent voice of Sir John Hammerton. Greta Garbo in *The Painted Veil* ran for two weeks at the Empire; *Forgotten Men* for twelve weeks at the Rialto.

R. J. MINNEY.

DISNEY EXHIBITION

TECHNICALLY, the recent Disney Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, London, was a success. It was arranged in a simple and straightforward manner, and with such a wealth of detail that the spectator (with the exception of the young person) was given a complete idea of the manner in which Disney and his staff of three hundred workers manage to produce thirteen Mickey Mouse cartoons and thirteen Silly Symphonies annually. It was so comprehensive, in fact, that one was immediately struck with a sense of the ease and simplicity with which it could all be copied, given, of course, a certain standard of ability and the essential capital.

Artistically, however, the show was second-rate. In an adjoining room a number of modern French paintings were on view, and the contrast was illuminating and compelling. The paintings were alive and vivid and expressive of their age. They contained those qualities of form and rhythm, of colour and design with which the contemporary artist captures his meaning. They impinged on one's consciousness, so to speak, and challenged one's acceptances. Disney, with his clever box of conjuring tricks, could produce nothing with half so much vitality. His language is the language of another plane of thought and imagination.

Pictorially speaking, the whole point of the Disney show lay in this very opportune experiment in comparison. The animated cartoon, without a doubt, is still only in its rudimentary stages, although it is capable of developing into a vital branch of cinematic art, given the necessary will and power of direction. It is a first-rate medium for the special qualities of the painter, apart from the mere dexterous handling of mechanism.

We all recognize and appreciate the humanity and life of Mickey Mouse. It must be borne in upon the inelastic brains of our film producers that the animated cartoon, as a special branch of cinema, has come to stay, that the people, as a whole, are enthusiastic about it, and that, given the necessary stimulus, it can yet reach unimagined heights of artistry and meaning.

Disney's technique has almost reached the apex of its power. He continues to give us something which is clever and funny, decorative,

and, on occasion, sinister; but he is not nearly within reach of his maturity as an artist. His imagination will have to expand, and his mind to grow, before he can yet produce an all-round, satisfying work of art.

It may be contended, with reason, that the majority of people prefer Mickey as he is, devoid of the artistic trappings which might detract from his naturalism. There is no earthly reason, apart from priggish presumption, why they should be deprived of the antics of the little fellow. He is cute and very winning, full of unexpected tricks, and able to play with the stabilities of life in a manner which pleases their careworn sense of responsibility.

We hope, however, that there is nothing carping or superior, or savouring of boards and baggy trousers, in the suggestion that there is still tremendous delight and meaning to be had from the animated cartoon, when developed from its purely pictorial angle. We have, we think, a right to these adult artistic satisfactions so sadly catered for. Must it be inevitable that financial considerations should obtain a stranglehold on this, as on every other, branch of cinema?

In this country, of course, the animated cartoon has not even reached the lusty, infantile stage of Micky Mouse, but there is no lack of artistic material in the country. With the co-operation of a few artists and art-schools, under the imaginative control of someone with an understanding of the medium, and, of course, the indispensable technical advisers, something could be built up which would be a definite challenge to the artistic timidities of the commercial cinema. Mickey and his playful eccentricities would not be smothered under the stifling mantle of Highbrowism. From this specialized angle of the film, there is room for Mickey as for the wider visions and more imaginative conceptions of the painter and poet.

ARTHUR SHEARSBY.

NEW BOOKS

JEW SÜSS (London, Methuen, 5s.) is the second of a series of scenarios which Ernest Betts is editing. It fulfils a useful purpose in showing the student what part the scenario actually plays in production, and by comparison with the original novel, what incidents in the book the adaptors considered most suitable for treatment on the screen. It is illustrated (though we could wish more fully) with stills and with sketches prepared by Alfred Junge for the decor.

MY OWN STORY. By Marie Dressler (London, Hurst & Blackett, 15s.) is the record of a fine actress with a great spirit and a sane philosophy. Much of the book is mere gossip, but there is also a great deal of shrewd wisdom, as, for instance, an old trouper's appeal

to the producers to give the public credit for ten times as much native intelligence as they do.

CINE-PHOTOGRAPHY FOR AMATEURS. By J. H. Reyner (London, Chapman & Hall, 10s. 6d.) appears in a new and revised edition, and with its many illustrations and technical hints should assist the amateur to get the best results out of the efficient apparatus now at his disposal.

PRACTICAL SET STRUCTURE. By D. Charles Ottley (London, Pitman, 5s.) is another useful book for the amateur, telling how studio sets, flats, and lighting units may be made economically and with a minimum of material resources. As a practical guide it will be welcomed by all amateur cine societies who possess a studio.

THE KINE YEAR BOOK (London, Kinematograph Publications, 10s.) contains as usual a vast amount of information about film production, distribution, and the organization of the trade at home and abroad. Its 600 odd pages are a valuable encyclopædia of the screen and an essential work of reference for everyone intimately connected with the cinema.

"MOVING PICTURE MONTHLY" 1935 ANNUAL (Bombay, Re. 1. 4.) is a trade-fan illustrated survey of Indian cinema affairs, which shows that, whatever may be the quality of native production, there exists in India a stupendous enthusiasm for the new art.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

CAMPBELL NAIRNE. Film critic of the Glasgow "Bulletin" and author of "One Stair Up" and "Stony Ground."

RICHARD GRIFFITH. American film student and journalist.

ARTHUR SHEARSBY. Notable British artist, at present planning experiment in cartoon films.

MARIE SETON. Well-known writer on cinema and drama, particularly Russian.

RAGNAR ALLBERG. Swedish film journalist.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG. Conducts the Little Cinema Theatre in Baltimore, U.S.A.

ERNEST BETTS. Film critic of the "Sunday Express."

R. J. MINNEY. Anglo-Indian journalist and author of the play "Clive of India" from which the film of the same name is adapted.

PAUL ROTH. At present directing *The Face of Britain* for G.-B. Instructional.

BASIL WRIGHT. Director of *The Song of Ceylon* and numerous other documentaries.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES. Director of the Everyman Cinema, Hampstead.

KINO FILMS have recently released several more Russian films on 16mm. stock, including the two Pudovkin masterpieces, *Mother* and *Storm Over Asia*, Trauberg's *New Babylon*, as well as two good shorts—*Oil Symphony* and a cartoon, *The Little Screw*. All these, as well as their other releases (*Potemkin*, *General Line*, *Son of a Soldier*, etc.), are complete and uncut versions, and all are on non-flam stock, which makes it possible to show them anywhere without restrictions.

KINO also handle the productions of the Workers' Film and Photo League, which include one or two short documentaries, a short story film, and three newsreels. Particulars may be obtained from KINO FILMS (1935) LTD., 84 Gray's Inn Road, W.C. 1.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

HOME—FROM ABROAD

FORSYTH HARDY

THE MAJOR British films for the quarter have been British in subject, if not all British in origin. America's movie regard for this country, of which preliminary intimation was given by the faithful and reverential *Cavalcade*, has apparently steadily swollen, and we have since had *Treasure Island*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The Key*, *Vanessa*, the Barrie films, the Dickens films, and now the films of the British in India. There is, of course, a commercial explanation for this unnatural display of devotion, as there is a commercial explanation for most of the apparently inexplicable enthusiasms of film production. The revenue which an American picture derives from the British market is a bulky weight in the profit and loss scales. The flattering of the British film-goer is thus a simple commercial necessity. With the limitation of the foreign market through language barriers, Hollywood is obliged to regard Britain and the English-speaking possessions as its main source of revenue outside America. No longer can it afford to think only of the American film-goer in planning its productions. Thus we have the handsome and meticulously respectful *David Copperfield* and the discreet and dignified *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. "It pays to be polite," the producers murmur, surveying the balance-sheets.

This material motive perceived, it would be idle to search for special significance in this latest movie tendency; yet from the point of view of the film as a vehicle for national expression, the development is interesting. The impression of British life which these American-made films create abroad is important for this country. They are going to be shown all over the world, and a large percentage of the audience, untravelled, illiterate, is going to accept this Britain as the real thing. Is it? So far, Hollywood has been cautious and there has been flattery rather than defamation. But Hollywood has not forgotten the firmly established maxim that trade follows the film, and has been careful not to show British methods and institutions and commerce in a more favourable light than American. Generally in those American-British films, there is the suggestion that Britain is just a little backward, that it is an old-world country of Tudor mansions and tottering taxi-cabs, of dull-witted policemen and gruff, grumpy generals, of antique plumbing systems and venerable timbered houses, out of which it would be no surprise to see Mr.

From the new American version
of "Les Misérables," produced
by Twentieth Century.

Fredric March is Valjean, and
Charles Laughton, Javert.

Director: Richard Boleslavsky.

Scenario: W. P. Lipscomb.





From "For All Eternity,"
Marion Grierson's film
of the Cathedrals of
England.
Production: Strand Films.



From Paul Rotha's "Shipyard,"
describing the building of an
Orient liner at Barrow-in-
Furness.
Production: Gaumont-British
Instructional.

Micawber step. Following this line of suspicious supposition, we wonder if it is entirely by chance that Victorian themes are those most in demand in Hollywood?

Of the authenticity of the Indian films I cannot speak; but R. J. Minney, who comments on this development in the *Miscellany*, has observed elsewhere of *Bengal Lancer* that it "has caught the spirit of the British in India, which is essentially a noble blend of valour and discipline and manliness of a type that the Western world of this generation, with its new mincing ways, has lost entirely. . . . We see in *Bengal Lancer* how India is really governed. There is on the surface the hard-playing, polo-loving, be-all and end-all of existence. Below it is the stern thoroughness, shot with a keen sense of justice and fair play, not the sadistic fury of tyranny." It is good to have this assurance from one qualified to pass judgment. Certainly the film gives a stalwart exposition of the ideals behind British military service in India; and Hollywood, with an easy confidence which producers in this country seem unable to achieve, gives vigorous expression to a fervent brand of British patriotism. This element apart, *Bengal Lancer* is an exciting adventure story, not without its violently melodramatic moments and its blots of bathos, but handled compellingly by Henry Hathaway, and, in form, essentially of the cinema. In the last respect particularly, *Clive of India* does not stand well beside the Paramount film. One can always sense that it has been conceived as a play; that the action has been cut to suit the limitations of back-cloth and footlights; and that the emphasis is primarily on characterisation rather than on the relation of a man to a mighty background. The film dwells but lightly on the effect of Clive's manœuvres in India. Indeed, it is quite timorous about India, and seems to be visibly relieved when the scene shifts back to London again. *Clive of India* throws off its literary harness and breaks away clean into movie only during the Plassey episode, where the armoured battle elephants claim for Suráj ud Dowlah the honour of inventing the tank. Skilled acting might yet have made this an impressive version of a fine play; but Ronald Colman and Loretta Young are out of their dramatic depth.

I can write with more knowledge of Hollywood's Barrie films as expressions of national life. It has been part of Barrie's achievement that he has introduced to a large audience Scottish types with which, from a purely music-hall or caricature conception, they were unfamiliar. Provided that they are made as carefully as *What Every Woman Knows* and *The Little Minister*, the filmed plays are likely to do the same for a very much larger audience in the cinema. They may not announce, as Scotsmen would like to see Scottish films announce to the world, that Scotland is a country of modern intentions rather than of ancient sentiments; but they will broaden and deepen a

certain conception of the Scots people. Both films contain allusions to aspects of Scots character seldom reflected on the screen. For example, in *What Every Woman Knows*, the railway porter's passionate enthusiasm for education is typical of a characteristic Scottish quality; and in *The Little Minister* we are shown something of the religious sectarianism characteristic of many Scots. *What Every Woman Knows* is the more faithful play transcription, some of Barrie's whimsicality having been transmuted to whining sentimentality in *The Little Minister*. Compensatory virtues in the latter film are its convincing Scottish atmosphere; the freedom given to an agile camera; and Katherine Hepburn's spirited and original reading of the part of Lady Babbie.

Britain also has been looking beyond her shores for film material. *The Dictator*, Toeplitz de Grand Ry's film of eighteenth-century Copenhagen, describing the romance of an ambitious but public-spirited Hamburg doctor and the young Queen of Denmark, Caroline Matilda, is sumptuous but hardly spirited, decorative but hardly deep. There is more flirting with history in *Abdul the Damned*. This is based on events in Turkey during and after the year 1908, and depicts Abdul Hamid, the autocratic but fear-ridden Sultan, being compelled by the Young Turks to sign a democratic constitution, and later, when he has temporarily brought the Old Turks back to power by branding their opponents with a political murder committed by his orders, being swept from the throne following a popular rising. There is good film material here; but the producers have confused this theme by introducing a conventionally melodramatic story of a threatened romance between a Viennese actress and a young Turkish officer, and the continual shifting of interest affects the suspense of the film, so that we are seldom gripped by its drama. Our interest is retained, however, by Fritz Kortner's study of a mind continually tormented by fear and suspicion; and by Karl Grune's vitalising direction. *Sanders of the River* is also a film of life outside Britain. I cannot, like Paul Rotha, who reviews the film elsewhere, write from first-hand knowledge of its African authenticity or otherwise. But I find it something new and engaging in film entertainment, vigorous if naïve in conception; and a remarkably effective exercise in editing and continuity, when the varied sources of the material are taken into consideration. It has life and movement and provokes some definite response, though these may all be lesser cinematic things than the achievement of representing the life of a people.

Meanwhile no one in this country makes films of Britain to-day. We have instead *Drake*, *Me and Marlborough* and *Peg of Old Drury*. And, of course, the Jubilee films.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Production: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction: George Cukor. Adaptation: Hugh Walpole. Screen play: Howard Estabrook. Photography: Oliver T. Marsh. With W. C. Fields, Freddie Bartholomew, Frank Lawton and others. Length: 11,726 feet.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Phillips Holmes, Henry Hull, Jane Wyatt. Length: 8,788 feet.

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

Production: Universal. Direction: Stuart Walker. Scenario: John L. Balderston and Gladys Unger. Photography: George Robinson. With Claude Rains, Heather Angel. Length: 7,670 feet.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Production: British International Pictures. Direction: Thomas Bentley. Adaptation: Margaret Kennedy. Photography: Claude Friese-Greene. Art Direction: Cedric Dawe. With Hay Petrie, Elaine Benson, Reginald Purdell. Length: 9,500 feet.

IT is interesting to speculate on the motives which induced the movie-makers of Hollywood and Elstree to embark almost simultaneously on screen versions of Dickens novels. Dickens would appear to exercise a fatal fascination over the minds of production executives. Perhaps it is that they share with him the delusion that he could write strong stories.

The impetus which set the latest cycle in motion may be ascribed to the popularity of films with an English background; and to the demand, stimulated by what Viertel amusingly calls the "chastity campaign," for films to which Poppa can take Momma and Junior. When one examines the Dickensian philosophy, deriving as much from the innate goodness of the man as from the Victorian disposition to set God above the Devil, it is not really surprising that producers should so often have gone back to Dickens for their screen material. In Dickens the Steerforths and Heeps come to a bad end, the Doras and the Little Nells are translated from this sad world to a better, the Pickwicks and the Pips, whatever their temporary embarrassments, earn their just meed of happiness in the final chapter. Virtue is rewarded and vice punished—which is exactly the comfortable code that has informed picture-making since the earliest days of the movies. Whether it squares with the facts or not is no matter; it suits the vested interests of filmdom that the public which lines up at the box office should be put to sleep with that opiate and persuaded to accept a false standard of values. That is not to suggest that Dickens was dishonest. He had the good fortune to see the world as a place so arranged that the Quilps reap what they sow. Nor must

one rashly impute dishonesty to the film producers, though abundant evidence of a coldly calculating outlook makes it much harder to believe in their good faith.

Obvious difficulties complicate the task of transcribing a Dickens novel into film form. Phillips Holmes, who plays the grown-up Pip in Universal's *Great Expectations*, is reported in an interview to have described Dickens as a born script writer. This is nonsensical. His long, rambling stories, framed to meet the exigencies of serial publication, are clearly unfitted to survive foreshortening on the Procrustean bed of a shooting-script. It is significant that the productions which capitalize the story—Universal's *Great Expectations* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—are much less successful than those which make characterisation their strong point—B.I.P.'s *The Old Curiosity Shop* and M.-G.-M.'s *David Copperfield*. By partially divesting *Edwin Drood* of its caricatured characters, Universal pull it down to the level of a second-rate thriller.

Recognition that the strength of Dickens lies in his phenomenal gift for comic characterisation is the first essential, but it leaves unsolved the problem of how to present the characters. They must seem convincing and yet square with the popular conception of them, which is pretty generally founded on the Cruikshank illustrations. All four films very wisely evade the pitfall of trying to tone down their oddity. They are larger than life; they have intense reality so long as they are not pitchforked into a realistic setting. Thus it seems to me that criticism of the theatricality of Hay Petrie's Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is ill-advised. His vivid, electric portrait is in itself justification of his defiance of the canons of screen acting. The conventional approach would have yielded much less satisfying results. So with the sharply defined character studies in *Copperfield*, some of which, notably W. C. Fields' Micawber, Edna May Oliver's Betsey Trotwood, and Lennox Pawle's Mr. Dick, suggest nothing so much as an animation of the original magazine engravings. The whole of *Copperfield* indeed is peculiarly reminiscent of old prints, and the final shot of the roguishly smiling Mr. Dick left at least one critic with the impression of having turned over the last page of an album.

Much has been made of Hollywood's skill in evoking the authentic English atmosphere, but that is perhaps the slightest of the producer's difficulties, and it is worth noting that in all four films under review, the period background has been convincingly suggested. It is, after all, not a formidable task to reproduce half-timbered houses and inn courtyards. And a Hugh Walpole can always be brought from England as an insurance against the hypercriticism of Dickensians. It is at least arguable that if the eccentricities of the characters are well preserved, they create the correct atmosphere of themselves.

In *Copperfield* it is the quality of the characterisation almost as much as the carefully elaborated period detail which recreates the spirit of coaching England as Dickens embalmed it in the novel. One can almost smell the aroma of harness and cold mutton.

Two interesting results of the Dickensian cycle may be noted. The Dickens films have imposed on producers a modification of their policy of considering the star first and the "vehicle" afterwards. One cannot tailor a Dickensian role to fit a particular star. The search for suitable types has brought fresh talent to the cinema—Henry Hull, Elaine Benson, Hay Petrie, and Freddie Bartholomew. The second result has been the realisation that sex is not the only box-office magnet: that a good warm feeling of happiness, such as pervades *Copperfield*, can always be relied on to pack 'em in. It will be reckoned one of the main achievements of the producers of Dickensian films that, accidentally or not, they proved the cash value of happiness.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

SANDERS OF THE RIVER.

Production: London Films. Direction: Zoltan Korda. Photography: Osmond Borrodaile, Georges Périnal, Bernard Browne. With Paul Robeson, Leslie Banks, Nina Mae McKinney.

Sanders follows the movie tradition set by *Trader Horn*. Here are the same old Murchison Falls as a background to palaver and war-dance (those Murchison Falls to which conducted tours from nearby Kampala and En Tebbe are weekly affairs), the same eagerly snatched chances for black nudity, almost the same old friendly faces of the local tribes. What else did you expect? A unit in Uganda with, I suspect, no script that mattered. A bright idea: Robeson. Corollary: Nina Mae. Weeks and weeks of Africa built at Shepperton and Elstree (they forgot the clouds were different) and negros dug from agents' files and café-bars. Later, much later, some hints thrown out by *Bengal Lancer*. It's Jubilee Year as well. So this is Africa, ladies and gentlemen, wild, untamed Africa before your very eyes, where the white man rules by kindness and the Union Jack means peace.

You may, like me, feel embarrassed for Robeson. To portray on the public screen your own race as a smiling but cunning rogue, as clay in a woman's hands (especially when she is of the sophisticated American brand), as toady to the white man, is no small feat. With Wimperis' lyrics of stabbing and killing, with a little son to hoist around, with a hearthrug round his loins, a medallion on his navel, and a plaster forest through which to stalk, what more could Robeson do, save not a pear at all? For the others, they do not matter. Just one mon nt in this film lives. Those aeroplane scenes of

galloping herds across the Attic Plains.

It is important to remember that the multitudes of *this* country who see Africa in this film, are being encouraged to believe this fudge is real. It is a disturbing thought. To exploit the past is the historian's loss. To exploit the present means, in this case, the disgrace of a Continent. What reception will it get in Africa? Similar, perhaps, to that of *Bengal Lancer* in India, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in France, *Red Ensign* on the Clyde. Who cares? It is only entertainment, after all.

PAUL ROTH.

ESCAPE ME NEVER

Production: British and Dominions. Direction: Paul Czinner. Scenario: Margaret Kennedy and Carl Zuckmeyer. Photography: Georges Périnal and Sepp Allgeier. Art Direction: L. P. Williams and André Andrejew. With Elisabeth Bergner, Hugh Sinclair, Griffith Jones, Penelope Dudley Ward. Length: 9,158 feet.

ST JOHN ERVINE and James Agate have recently been playing pitch and toss in the Sunday newspapers over the degree of greatness of Elisabeth Bergner's acting, judged from the evidence of the stage version of "Escape Me Never." For once I find myself in agreement with the former who states that the critic who could not instantly tell that the Bergner is a great actress after seeing her in Margaret Kennedy's play is incapable of pronouncing an opinion on acting. The latter argues weakly that if she had filled out the part of the perky little baggage, Gemma, with all the sweeping grandeur and essential nobility of mien, gesture and declamation, "lacking possession of which a tragic actress cannot be called *great*," she would have been false to the character and so betrayed her author. And St John Ervine properly retorts that the very fact that she did not betray her author by making hay of "Escape Me Never" with exhibitions of sweeping grandeur, etc., is in itself proof of her artistry.

As a show-piece for the revelation of the Bergner's virtuosity as an actress, I prefer the film *Escape Me Never* to *Catherine the Great* and to any of the German pictures, with the possible exception of *Der Traumende Mund*. The play doubtless exists only in her performance; but this "sentimental little solo in vagabondage" is perfectly fashioned to display every aspect of her technique as an actress. Everything calculated to secure our sympathy happens to Gemma, the wistful little waif, impudent, loyal, intuitive, whom Sebastian Sanger picks up in Vienna and marries in London, where she later loses her baby in the service of musical genius. But the demands on our sympathy, if unwavering, are skilfully made and Bergner chooses the precise moment to slip from laughter to tears, knows

exactly when to be majestic and when mischievous. She shows what acting can be, expressing volumes with the shrug of a shoulder, the drag of a limb; and, using dialogue brilliantly, she yet expresses much without words.

We are left with the impression of an essentially solo performance. The camera does its work of photographing Bergner smoothly, sensitively and unobtrusively and Paul Czinner in his direction reveals that mastery over mood which made *Der Traumende Mund* memorable.

F.H.

SHIPYARD

Production: Gaumont-British Instructional. Direction: Paul Rotha. Photography: Pocknall, Bundy, Goodliffe, Rignold. Length: 2,250 feet.

The growing pains of documentary are shared in full measure by the documentary director. He is anguished by the perpetual conflict between the claims of form and content. The constructive use of sound introduces further complications; working to coalesce two independent mediums into an interdependent whole, he finds himself at frequent cross-purposes with all the theories he holds most dear. In point of fact, the documentarist probably suffers from a perverse kind of conservatism which urges him to cling pathetically to the technique of the last masterpiece but one. It is only in books and criticism that films like *Turksib* and *Drifters* fall into their rightful place as milestones necessarily past.

There are signs, however, that documentary is about to pass from this indeterminate conservatism to a crazier and more dangerous world. To experimentation we can now add continuity of purpose and plan, on the basis of reportage plus lyricism, plus a strong sociological consciousness. On top of this let the director be as lunatic as he likes and plunge into that unexplored area where Marx and the Marx Brothers play nuts in May with Dostoevski. He will emerge rumpled, but with a masterpiece, and naturally he must be free to ignore the box-office (or rather the things behind it).

This leads us to Rotha who, tied as he has been by influences beyond his immediate control, signals, nevertheless, in *Shipyard*, his emergence from the period of agonies and indecision. He tells of the building of the Orion—crack vessel for the Orient Line—not so much in terms of shipbuilding as in terms of Barrow and its people. Each stage of the ship's construction is put across in flesh and blood, and for all the steel-plates and girders and turbines and riveting and hammering, it is very much the men who stand up most in one's mind. Yet the emphasis is not pressed. Visually, the growing ship engrosses the screen. The sound is permeated with the clangour of the yard. But by cunning punctuation (in terms chiefly of dissolve

and soliloquy) the sociological mood is stressed.

These remarks are, I think, enough to show that in this film Rotha has made an immense step forward, and is now finally in control of his medium.

His technique is, however, still somewhat tentative. Some of the best ideas are not developed more than half-way (hence my plea for the director to stick to his craziness). A good example is a very striking sequence with a riveter at work soliloquising on the future life of the Orion, which puts the general feeling very beautifully, but does not, as it might so effectively have done, similarly pursue (quite briefly) the more intimate problems of the workers' lives (especially in reference to that ultra-civilized bogey, unemployment).

The basis of the sound-score is the shipyards' terrifying row. The Doric voice of the announcer-commentator reverberates with immense effect from the echoing caverns of the incomplete hull. Sound is also overlapped for continuity with considerable skill.

But where Rotha pushes himself well up on the directorial roster is in his final sequence—a smooth and impressive treatment of the launch (the camera restraint is most gratifying), followed by a really moving anti-climax as the workers move uncertainly away from the empty stocks. The pathetic indecision of the worker in the final fade-out is masterly.

Photography is, as usual, excellent, but also unobtrusive—another sign of progress. Cutting is very good, although I still cannot reconcile myself to the deliberate alterations of long shot and close-up which Rotha delights in. This objection, however, may be too personal.

BASIL WRIGHT.

FOR ALL ETERNITY

Production: Strand Films. Direction: Marion Grierson. Length: two reels.

IN DOCUMENTARY, as in all cinema, technique must always come second to subject, but equally technique must be sufficiently good for the subject to have adequate expression. The trouble with so many of our documentalists is their over-emphasis of technique and their underestimate of subject. But here, in this two-reeler of the cathedrals of England, is firstly a dignified respect for subject, and secondly an intelligent although not brilliant use of camera and microphone, and, above all, a moving interpretation of that curious phenomenon—the spirit of the church. My congratulations go out unreservedly to Marion Grierson for this film. Not only has she made, so modestly, a picture that will reach the emotions of any audience, but she has in this era of social unrest and mental disorder, put on the screen something which even the godless must admit has roots deeply embedded in what we call the traditions of the country. Her film will, I believe, be tremendously successful because it transmits something

solid. It has the power not just of technical creation or good looks, but of facts—hard, indisputable facts—instead of the publicity fudge which so often goes for subject in current documentary. And when, throwing open the doors of her church, she cross-sections the community in town and country, industry and street, underneath the chant of choir and the richness of anthem, your hardest materialist will be disturbed at this manifestation of faith. Again, here is no fixed moment of time hung suspended on the screen, but a feeling of continuance, a feeling of something started in dim ages that lives not just to-day but for all time. Miss Grierson has achieved something which, I think, no other documentary has done and which, I am sure, most other documentalists would be unable to do, because they lack both her simplicity of approach and that disregard of personal advancement which is reflected so strongly in her work. And, lastly, I am impressed by the skilful way in which instruction and knowledge have been mixed with emotional appeal so that both theatre audience and school class will benefit by the film, an accomplishment that makes some of these purely educational pictures look rather like waste of time and effort.

PAUL ROTH

THE CONTINENTALS

THIS quarter's continentals have been a mixed bag: one or two very good, others passable, and others negligible.

The most interesting, although one of the least commercially successful of the new films, was *Hey-Rup!*, a Czecho-Slovakian comedy with an undercurrent, perhaps unintentional, of sociological comment. It is loosely constructed, and the leading parts are played by two popular Czech comedians, Jiri Voskovec and Jan Werich. Their wanderings before establishing a co-operative milk factory are often extremely diverting, but there is too much of this, and the high spots are separated by long intervals when nothing seems to happen at all. Some episodes smack of Chaplin, others of Clair. The sound is good and the exteriors and interiors are well photographed. Technically, the film confirms the favourable impressions made by *Pred Maturitou* and *Exstase*, but as a whole it lacks any marked public appeal. It is a film for the student.

Some gorgeous fooling was seen in *Skylark*. The story is of two apprentices who go up in an aeroplane, each being under the impression that the other is an instructor. Having ascended, they are afraid to come down. They stay up for a considerable time and break every conceivable record for endurance, distance, and so on. Eventually they land, to be acclaimed national heroes. It is a comparatively short film, and even so takes rather a long time to get into its stride; but once the aeroplane goes up the fun is immense.

Noel-Noel and Fernandel are the aviators. Noel-Noel is a newcomer here. He is short, stocky, and specialises in button-eyed innocence. Those who saw *Le Rosier de Madame Husson* will not have forgotten the inspired lunacy of Fernandel, and he is exceedingly effective in *Skylark*. The denizens of Mayfair were also entertained by another arm-chair film in *Farewell*, an elegant and admittedly inaccurate story of Chopin's life. It is a polished piece of work with some pleasant music, and a number of Chopin's illustrious contemporaries are more or less convincingly represented. Entertaining, engaging and slick, but no landmark.

Those who read Vicki Baum's "Martin's Summer" must have been struck by its filmic possibilities. It has been filmed under the title *Lac aux Dames*, and duly shown in London. But it never properly gets to grips with the story, and a great deal more might have been made of the scenic background. Nevertheless, it succeeds in being reasonably entertaining, and Simone Simon, who plays the part of Puck, is most enchanting. For her sake alone the film should be seen. The faults lie in the scenario and direction, both of which are ponderous and out of tune with the basic story.

The London Film Society showed an interesting Polish film, *Sabra*, in which all the players are members of the Habima, the national theatre of Palestine. The theme is the colonisation of Palestine, and the film shows a group of pioneers fighting against the difficulty of obtaining water for the fertilisation of the land. The acting, as one might expect, is exceptionally good without being markedly theatrical, and the direction is firm and convincing. Much of the photography is excellent, and although the film runs to length and some of the episodes appear to be obscurely related to the context, as a whole it is a vigorous and refreshing piece of work.

The Old King and the Young King is magnificent. Jannings makes a triumphant and convincing return to the screen in a film after his own heart. It is the traditional, authentic Jannings, and how pleasant it is to find that he has lost none of his fire—and none of his mannerisms—during a long absence from the screen. The story is of the conflict between Frederick I of Prussia, the great soldier and statesman, and his son the Crown Prince, who is bored by soldiering and diplomacy, preferring his flute and the card-table. Frederick loves his Prussia, and is afraid lest his son should undo all his good work when he becomes king. So he determines to change his son's character, and the conflict which ensues is brilliantly depicted. Jannings dominates the film from beginning to end, without blurring the individuality of any of the other players. Werner Hinz, as the Crown Prince, is particularly effective, and the first great quarrel between him and his father is one of the most exciting things seen

in cinema for a long time. Other well-known actors in the film are Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Emilia Unda, Claus Clausen and Theodor Loos. The scenario is by Thea von Harbou and Rudolf Luckner with music by Wolfgang Zeller. Hans Steinhoff directed.

I prefer merely to record that three other films, *The Eternal Wanderer*, *Mireille* and *Son Autre Amour* have also been seen in London. But not by many people.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

RUGGLES OF RED GAP (*American. Paramount*). Charles Laughton has said that he enjoyed playing the part of Ruggles more than any other on stage or screen; and his performance definitely has that fine, rich, sustained quality which results when an artist has delighted in expression. Ruggles is an English valet of 1908, who, descendant of a long line of servants, accepts his destiny without question—a gentleman's gentleman who is inevitably fundamentally disturbed when circumstances compel him to go, as man-servant to a rancher, to the little Mid-Western town of Red Gap, a democratic whirlpool in which he can nowhere find a safe, familiar footing. But gradually he recovers from the shattering experience, discovers his manhood and his independence and finds fresh refuge and reassurance in the democratic principles expressed by Lincoln at Gettysburg. The scene in which he recites Lincoln's speech to a bar-room audience at Red Gap—an audacious experiment—is brilliantly handled by Laughton and his director, Leo McCarey. Admirably the film contrives to combine the liveliest clowning with an imaginative study of the atmosphere of American democracy and its emancipating influence on an Englishman, complacent product of generations of servitude. If it tilts wickedly at the English aristocracy, the film makes fun also of American snobbery and its picture of Anglo-American relations is always agreeable. Every film in which Laughton appears seems to give fresh evidence of his virtuosity. It is good to know that Hollywood has discovered his potentialities as a comedian. *Ruggles of Red Gap* has been described as pure Chaplin and the comparison is not entirely without foundation.

F.H.

THE WEDDING NIGHT (*American. United Artists. King Vidor*). This is an excellent illustration of the rule that Art will not come when you do call for it. Just previously, I saw *It Happened One Night* as it was being revived. I daresay no one concerned thought of the word "art" throughout its production. Yet this little comedy, unimportant and careless as it is, has ten times the creative strength and honesty of any part of *The Wedding Night*—of anything by Vidor, I am tempted to say, since *The Big Parade*. In his latest picture, Vidor has tried to tell a tragedy of love between a metropolitan novelist, married, and a Polish immigrant on a tobacco farm in Connecticut, engaged. It is a possible thesis, but Vidor has reduced it to the least common denominator, to squeeze the last drop of "human interest" from it. The result is a completely impossible sob-story. No one is believable, nothing that happens is convincing, save in terms of Bertha M. Clay. Something might have been saved had the players been even remotely in part. But Anna Sten, Gary Cooper, and Helen Vinson are all hopelessly at odds with their roles, though perhaps that was only a natural consequence. To add that the direction itself is generally undistinguished if not mediocre completes the sad story. Nevertheless, the film is Art, and the critics have praised it to the skies.

KIRK BOND.

WORKERS AND JOBS (*British*). A straightforward description in one reel of the working of a Labour Exchange showing, without frills or fuss, how men get or do not get work, and what advantages the employer would enjoy if he made greater use of the machinery organised by the Ministry of Labour. With the slender resources at his disposal, I do not see that Elton could have done any other than he has, save perhaps have selected a commentator whose voice would have been more suited to the atmosphere of the Exchange. Photography is adequate, but sound might have been more carefully synchronised. P.R.

DOOD WASSER (*Dutch*). An attempt, sincere but naïve, from a new quarter to relate the human being to his surroundings in bringing a social problem to the screen. The theme is the resistance of the Zuyder Zee fishermen to the appeal to give up their old calling and settle on the reclaimed land, with an elaborate prologue of maps and news-reel excerpts to put across the history of the event. Treatment is silent in style, uneconomic and laboured, but the types are well chosen and the climaxes well contrived. As a whole, the film is too long by half. P.R.

ITTO (*French*). Another attempt to superimpose a fictional story on natural material, again suffering from over-statement and over-length. Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein (of *La Maternelle*) have secured lovely scenery and types of North Africa, but the infusion of the maternal instinct is embarrassingly handled without much result. Yet, despite its unimaginative use of sound and poor construction, *Itto* offers a more than welcome change from the ordinary release story-films. P.R.

PRIVATE LIFE OF THE GANNETS (*British. United Artists*). Charming, instructive, but too long, this first of a series of nature pictures put out beneath the chime of London Films makes a healthy bid for game. Gannets, as Professor Huxley admits, are easy birds to film, but that is no alibi for the lovely use of slow motion and the beautifully shot sequence of diving. In the past, these nature films in England have been almost the monopoly of a single group. With this first effort, London Films and Huxley have forced the pace and shot ahead. They have brought beauty of photography and a certain skill of editing to bear upon the subject. P. R.

ARE WE CIVILISED? (*American. Edwin Carewe*). The naïvety of this story of modern censorship and suppression of personal freedom is offset by the timeliness of its theme and its obvious sincerity and earnestness. A newspaper proprietor who returns from America to an unspecified European country, finds a rigorous censorship of news and books in force and, by recounting the story of man's progress from early days of cave life to modern times, seeks to convince the country's rulers of the error and danger of their ways. The film's treatment and approach are hardly imaginative, but it is significant of the present concern with thoughtful themes in Hollywood that such a subject should have been attempted. F.H.

WHARVES AND STRAYS (*British. London Films*). An independent short by Bernard Browne which claims praise for its courage and photography. The adventures of a mongrel dog, Scruffy, in exploring the activities of the London docks supply the theme and the camera for the most part concentrates its attention on the loading and unloading of ships, the work of the men on board ship and on the dockside, the low linked barges and the fussy movements of the tugs. There is no commentary, but music is used effectively to establish mood and make witty comment. And the camerawork suggests the work of a man with a feeling for mass and line.

FILM SOCIETIES

STILL the movement grows. New bodies have been formed, or are in course of formation, at Wolverhampton, Bristol, Southport, Romford, Swansea, Maidenhead, and Ipswich.

Apart from the regular film societies, numerous other organisations are now including the showing of films among their activities. The Colne Literary and Scientific Society, for instance, is co-operating with one of the local cinemas in a scheme for exhibiting films "of exceptional merit" which would not otherwise be shown in this corner of Lancashire.

The idea behind the Colne experiment was to hold a "Club Night" once a month, at which the Society would choose the films to be included in the programme and induce its members and the public generally to attend. For the first performance 1000 circulars were issued and as a result every seat was filled, 834 persons being present. The demand for admission to the second performance was even greater. Charles Hargeaves, the hon. secretary, believes "that they have discovered that there is a large untapped reservoir of people who would go to the cinema regularly if they could be assured of a decent programme and if they knew beforehand what they would see."

Colne, with a population of 24,000, has shown what can be done in a town of almost any size. Here is a way in which "Literary" societies, now rapidly dying out, can achieve a new lease of life and at the same time help to develop a wider appreciation of intelligent films.

Leeds is still without its long-projected exhibiting society, the Watch Committee having again refused an application by the Leeds Film Group to hold performances on a Sunday. Fortunately Leeds has an excellently conducted repertory cinema, the Academy, which shows Continentals, revivals, and a good selection of shorts.

WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY will commence its first season in October, with a subscription of 10s. 6d. The Director of Education, T. A. Warren is chairman, and Leslie B. Duckworth, film critic of the "Express and Star," is vice-chairman. The programme secretary is E. L. Packer and the membership secretary W. P. Hyde, 78 Belmont Road.

The secretary of the Ipswich Film Society is Gordon C. Hales, 36 Constable Road, and A. South, 1 Mashsieters Walk, Romford, is the secretary of the Romford Film Circle. Clifford Leech, University College, Swansea; F. G. Searle, 21 Cairns Road, Bristol, 6; and Graham Morrison, 31 Grange Road, Southport, will be pleased to receive enquiries in their respective districts.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. Feb. 10. *Ave Maria*, Three Trailers, *Chapayev*. Mar. 10. *Workers and Jobs*, *Das Gestohlene Herz*, *Ship of the Ether*, *Dood Wasser*. April 7. *Pêcheurs D'Oiseaux*, Two Publicity films, *Itto*.

ABERDEEN FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., A. L. Stephen Mitchell, 15 Golden Square. Jan. 13. *Rain*, *Derby Day*, *La Maternelle*. Feb. 10. *Lichtertanz*, *Lot in Sodom*, *Liebes Kommando*. Mar. 10. *Pacific 231*, *We Take off our Hats*, *Der Traumende Mund*.

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Secs., H. S. Coles and Mrs. E. H. Sale, 3 Cambridge Terrace, Norton-on-Tees. Jan. 23. *Europe To-day*, *Astronomy*, *Weather Forecast*, *Silly Symphony*, *Liebes Kommando*. Feb. 20. *Bathtime at the Zoo*, *Silly Symphony*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Mar. 20. *Song of the Ski*, *Pett and Pott*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Liebelelei*. April 17. *Pacific Problem*, *War Debts*, *Spring on the Farm*, *Cathode Ray*, *Silly Symphony*, *Reka*.

COLNE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., C. Hargeaves, Greystones, Colne. Feb. 20. *Newsreel, Silly Symphony, Everest 1924, Kameradschaft*. Mar. 27. *Newsreel, O'er Hill and Dale, Mickey Mouse, Carmen, Le Million*.

The Society hopes to arrange an extended season next winter and to include lectures on various aspects of the cinema.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street. Jan. 20. *Mickey Mouse, Spring on the Farm, Poil de Carotte*. Feb. 17. *Crazy Ray, Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Mar. 17. *The Battle of Arras, Blow Bugles Blow*.

Talks have been given by H. Ewan on the French Cinema, and by Sir Philip Gibbs on The Battle of Arras. Ivor Montagu and Paul Rotha were guests at the Society luncheon on March 17, when they addressed the members.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 S. St. Andrew Street. Feb. 24. *Dawn to Dawn, Joie de Vivre, Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Mar. 24. Two Gasparcolor shorts, *All Quiet in the East*, Fischinger abstract, *The Song of Ceylon, Refugees*.

Campbell Nairne addressed the Guild on "A Novelist's View of the Scenario," and D. Cleghorn Thomson took the chair at a discussion on "The Relations Between Cinema and Stage." On Feb. 6 there was a special show of G.P.O. films in the Studio.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec., D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. Feb. 3. *Football Daft, All Quiet in the East, Nachtliche Ruhestung, Ces Messieurs de la Santé*. Feb. 24. 6.30 Collection, *The Idea, Lieblei*. Mar. 17. *Le Million, Joie de Vivre, Refugees*.

The membership of the Society has grown to such an extent that it has been necessary to hold afternoon as well as evening performances. Glasgow, as well as being the oldest society outside of London, is now probably the largest—and certainly not the least enthusiastic or efficient.

HAMPSTEAD FILM SOCIETY. Everyman Cinema Theatre, London, N.W.3. Jan. 20. *Un Monastère, Warning Shadows*. Feb. 17. *Beyond This Open Road, Blow, Bugles, Blow*. Mar. *Der Gestolene Herz, Domesday England, Zero de Conduite*. April. *The Birth of a Nation*.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College. Jan. 19. *What the Newsreel Shows, Oil Symphony, All Quiet in the East, A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker* (colour primitive), *Rapt*. Feb. 9. *Beyond this Open Road, Oil Symphony, The Doomed Battalion, Nachtliche Ruhesturung*. Feb. 16. *The Sundew, Un Monastère, Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Mar. 16. Three Early Fragments, *Droitwich, Anna und Elisabeth, Joie de Vivre*. April 13.

The Society arranged a special exhibition of sketches by Stella Burford, illustrating work inside a British film studio.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford. Jan. 19. *Power, Mail, Charlemagne*. Feb. 16. *Russia To-day, Gamla Stan, Pett and Pott, Fischinger abstract, Oil Symphony*. Mar. 16. *Vienna the Wonderful, The Amæba, Contact, Zero de Conduite*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. Feb. 15. *Zuts Cartoon, Oil Symphony, Poil de Carotte*. April 12. *Night on the Bare Mountain, Joie de Vivre, Dawn to Dawn, Men and Jobs*.

On Feb. 26 there was a special exhibition of educational films arranged by Gaumont-British, and on April 25 there was a show of G.P.O. films. On Mar. 14 Dorothy Knowles spoke on "Censorship," and on Mar. 24 C. J. Graham on "Acting for Films in 1912." *Cinderella* was shown on sub-standard.

NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., H. A. Green, 6 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, London, N.16. Feb. 3. *Crossing the Great Sagrada, Gasparcolor, Lot in Sodom, The Living Corpse*.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. Mar. 8. *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Weather Forecast*, *The Blue Express*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. Feb. 10. *Weather Forecast*, *Silly Symphony*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*. Feb. 24. *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *The Pacific Problem*, *Silly Symphony*, *The Birth of a Nation*. Mar. 10. *Joie de Vivre*, *Pett and Pott*, *Silly Symphony*, *Men and Jobs*.

F. Serpell has been elected President and F. L. Harley Secretary.

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY, 21 Ethelbert Avenue, Bassett Green, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester. Jan. 27. *Un Monastère*, *La Maternelle*. Feb. 17. *A Trip to Davy Jones' Locker*, *Industrial Britain*. *Ces Messieurs de la Sante*. Mar. 3. *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Joie de Vivre*, *Poil de Carotte*. Mar. 17. *Turksib*, *The Slump is Over*.

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., M. C. Pottinger, Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle. Jan. 27. Fischinger abstract, *Pett and Pott*, *Trailer*, *Reka*. Feb. 24. *Pacific 231*, *Crazy Ray*, *Poil de Carotte*. Mar. 24. Fischinger abstract, *Granton Trawler*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Thunder Over Mexico*. April 14. *Weather Forecast*, *Gasparcolor*, *Surprise Item*, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*.

The White Hell of Pitz Palu and *Storm over Asia* have been shown on sub-standard and there has been a special Young People's Performance. Discussions are held after each show.

WEST OF SCOTLAND WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., James Hough, 16 Balerno Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2. Feb. 10. *The Mascot*, *The Idea*, *Avanche*. Mar. 3. *The Home of the Wasp*, *Granton Trawler*, *Men and Jobs*. Mar. 31. *Deserter*.

THE CINEMA GUILD OF DETROIT is a new organisation similar to the film societies operating in Britain, founded on a belief that "the standards of American motion pictures underestimate public taste," and that "the rulings of institutionalised censorship constitute a reflection on public taste." The subscription for six performances is four dollars, and the films shown have included *Poil de Carotte*, *Madame Bovary*, *Le Million*, *The Blue Light*, *The Blue Express*, *Dawn to Dawn*, *Lot in Sodom*, and *Romance Sentimentale*.

THE NATIONAL FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE, 31 E. 21st Street, New York, shows films of strong left wing character. Among recent presentations have been *The Man I Killed*, *The Patriot*, *Three Songs about Lenin*, *Deserter*, *Arsenal*, *Road to Life*, *Storm Over Asia*, *End of St. Petersburg*, *Mother*, and *Ivan*. The League publishes "Filmfront," a fortnightly periodical which "trains the burning spotlight on the Hollywood jungle and shows the black thread that links the producers with the forces of re-action."

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CINEMATOGRAPHY, University Park, Los Angeles, is a new organisation founded on lines similar to the British Film Institute, co-operating with the University of Southern California, which has a special faculty in cinematography.

SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL CINEMA SOCIETY, Education Offices, Bath Street, Glasgow, organised an Exhibition of Screen Aids to Education, similar to that held last year. Sir Charles Cleland, acting chairman of the British Film Institute, in opening the exhibition, said that early in 1935 there were approximately 650 projectors in use in schools in Great Britain. In France in 1932 there were between 16,000 and 18,000. In Germany provision had recently been made for the introduction of 60,000 projectors into schools, 10,000 of those to be installed in 1935. Demonstrations of projection equipment and of educational films were given at the exhibition, which was largely attended by teachers in the West of Scotland.

THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

Official Organ of the Independent Film-Makers Association

DOCUMENTARY

EDUCATIONAL

EXPERIMENTAL

ADVISERS : ANTHONY ASQUITH, ANDREW BUCHANAN, JOHN GRIERSON, ALAN HARPER,
STUART LEGG, PAUL ROTH, BASIL WRIGHT.

HON. SECY. : THOMAS H. BAIRD. HON. TREAS. : J. C. H. DUNLOP. EDITOR : LESLIE BEISIEGEL.
32 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.1.

SCOPE FOR THE SILENT FILM

FROM schools, technical colleges, institutions, mobile units, training centres and other sources there comes an increasing demand for documentary and educational films. All of these films are on sub-standard and, most important for the amateur, they are wanted mainly silent.

We can assume then that the future of the silent documentary film on sub-standard is assured, and that it will be used extensively in the near future. This is where the independent producer appears. He has been making films for schools and colleges; he has been making documentary; he has made educational films; and for the entertainment side, which seems to be growing larger, he has made entertainment films. But something has been missing from nearly every one of them, something that constitutes the basis of cinema: movement. These silent films have lost sight of the fact that they are unhampered by sound or commentary and therefore capable of more dynamic and kinetic treatment.

All films, and most educational films, are not suited for quick rhythmical development, but those which are have not attained the movement even of an early Fairbanks. They merely follow the technique of sound-film. There is still opportunity for the amateur to continue the art of silent film, which is capable of development as a separate medium, as the colour film is being developed. All recent developments of cinema have made it harder and harder for the producer to introduce essential and rapid movement into his films. The wealth of movement which was to be found in rushing crowds; the movement in the camera itself, which the Germans perfected; the movement of the film-strips which the Soviets dis-

covered—has been thrown overboard. Amateurs with enthusiasm must fish it out again and explore its further possibilities.

Movement dominates people's lives. The panorama outside a railway carriage, however depressing, has most of the people in the train looking at it. The sea with its constant movement claims its millions. The moving figure or living person in the shop window always has a crowd. When lying in bed, the fly gets more attention than the Rembrandt on the wall. A quickly changing face showing all its emotions is generally loved more than a poker face that moves but little. Movement is in everything, and only the film has the power of showing it pictorially, and perhaps the silent film has the power of showing it most successfully. The amateur need not bewail the fact that he does not have sound at his disposal; in the silent film he still has a vast field in which to develop his technique and explore the possibilities of a medium still far from extinction.

LESLIE BEISIEGEL.

AMATEUR FILMS

GRETCHEN HAT AUSGANG (*Ellen Rosenberg*, 16mm.). This little film with a simple theme has been excellently treated. A lonely servant girl on her afternoon out nearly has an affair with a nice young man, but the budding romance never happens because the poor girl suddenly discovers that it is time for her to return to her duties. Ellen Rosenberg has made this awkward girl, who gazes stupidly at statues of Cupid and hopelessly plucks the petals of flowers one by one, something wistful and even slightly tragic. Delicate touches have given the right emphasis to the theme and a completeness of atmosphere that is seldom seen in an amateur film. Many lessons can be taken from this film; briefly, that it is not necessary to have studios, that the best themes are the simple ones, the best actors are those who don't act but behave naturally, and lastly that one frame of sincerity is worth a reel of sophistication. The camera angles are good and the cutting is good inasmuch that one does not notice it.

HEITERER TAG AUS RÜGEN (*Ellen Rosenberg*, 16mm.). This symphonic film of a pleasant sojourn on the Isle of Rügen has perhaps the most beautiful photography that I have seen on 16mm. There are three main motifs, a mechanical swing, a group of horses and the sea on the sand. It is through movement that Ellen Rosenberg gets her effects—movement of material and rhythm in her cutting. Though the camera angles are well chosen the cutting is not so good. Quicker cutting could have been used at the climax of the film, coming as a natural development of the mood of growing hilarity.

PONT DES ARTS (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). This is another symphonic film, but different in mood. Down-and-outs, the Seine, huge gaunt trees, mud, dirt and despair. Here is hopelessness, devastating bleakness; here men thrown on the scrap-heap become little more than parcels of rags. Do we know what they are thinking? Coppola's film does not tell us this, but shows us how they live. There is no entreaty, no personal argument, but a revelation through impassionate eyes. Is this attitude correct? Whether an artist must also be a political or a social reformer is for the artist to decide.

Technically the photography is good and several shots are perfect in composition and texture; but there is too much movement in the camera and not enough in the material. The continuity has to rely upon pictorial cohesion and not upon development of content—the look of the picture as against the meaning of the picture. This is a good attempt.

DER TRAUM (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). The influence of the sur-realists has made Coppola produce an intriguing and amusing film. A young man is shown asleep with his head on the table amid egg-shells and knife and fork. There are some pleasing patterns here, but what is their Freudian or symbolic significance? The young man sees his "Sunday self" mocking him by stealing his pocket book, with much money therein, and insinuating that he also intends doing likewise with the young man's lover. The week-day man and the same man on Sundays are symbolised by a topper and bowler hat. This is good symbolism and when one man chases the other there is an excellent atmosphere in the slow-motion scenes of the chase. The kinetics of the falling hat and ball are excellent; the movements of such commonplace things carry that strange kind of personality they have in dreams.

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (*Horacio Coppola*, 16mm.). Here is an account of a Sunday at Hampstead, showing the types of people who frequent the Heath. It has several short sequences that are good both in continuity and cutting. I remember the chairs and their attendant, the fair in the evening, the impressive scene of all the people walking in one direction towards their homes. There is a subtle streak of engaging drollery running through the film. Why very fat women posed straight up in front of the camera should look so funny only Coppola with his artful angles knows. The various moods have been established, sometimes with success, but cutting down would greatly improve the film. The photography is good and some pictorial arrangements very exciting. There are some filtered clouds and reflecting lakes that are very beautiful, and the whole film is well exposed.

THE GREAT RARZO (*Rudolf Sieb*, 9.5mm.). Here is an example of a branch of film-making, with puppets and models, which might be adopted by many amateurs. The models are ordinary toy motors and tin men. The animation is remarkably even and there are some amusing camera angles that are only possible with a small camera. The plot is simple; the daring young man on the flying trapeze seems to have inspired the actions of the Great Rarzo, who flies most filmically backwards, upside down, in reverse, top to bottom and *vice versa*. It is remarkable what the ingenious can do with some sheets of paper, indian ink and a few toys. A couple, I believe, of small lamps give all the necessary lighting and incidentally some very amusing shadowgraphs. The cutting is something of a satire on Russian technique. Imagine dogs' heads, Bonzos, Dismal Desmonds, Fidos, in a Trauberg sequence!

THE METEOR FILM PRODUCING SOCIETY is planning an ambitious production schedule for the summer. Three competitions are being run for its members: (1) for beginners, the subject being a holiday film; (2) any item on 16 mm. suitable for a newsreel; (3) an abstract subject, on any size of stock, limited to one reel in length. Miniature cups have been presented for the winners of these competitions by the treasurer, Jack Robertson, Jr. The Society as a group will produce one interest film and one story film, while a 9.5 section has been inaugurated. Work on 35 mm. is also carried out by the Society. The Scottish Amateur Film Festival, inaugurated by the Meteor Film Society two years ago, is to be still further expanded this autumn. There is a proposal that in future it should be run under the auspices of the Scottish Film Council. Secretary: Stanley L. Russell, 14 Kelvin Drive, Glasgow, N.W.

AT A film show held in aid of the Kensington Housing Association's Benevolent Fund the performance consisted of films by Matthew L. Nathan. Documentary predominated and included a housing film, *Pomp and Circumstance*, and one of the Founding Estate entitled *Nursery School*.

LONDON IFMA GROUP MEETINGS are now held regularly every Monday at eight o'clock at Chequers, 6 Park Road, Upper Baker Street. Any members interested are invited to step along.

THE NORTH ST. PANCRAS GROUP of the St. Pancras House Improvement Society has filmed its housing conditions on 16 mm. Particulars can be obtained from 118a Euston Road, London, N.W. 1.

BRIAN SALT has made an animated diagram illustrating some trigonometrical laws. This is on 9.5 mm. and the animation is excellent.

ROBERT ALEXANDRE's film of Trappist life, *Un Monastère*, recently shown at the London Film Society, has been added to the Patheoscope 9.5 library.

THE SCOTTISH PHOTOGRAPHIC FEDERATION offers the Brewster Trophy for the best amateur film submitted to the annual Salon, which, so far as still photography is concerned, is one of the most important events of the season. There is no restriction as to subject, but all films must have a maximum length of 50 feet, 8 mm.; 120 feet, 9.5 mm.; 200 feet, 16 mm. Full particulars may be obtained from the Cine Secretary, R. Steedman, 14 Viewfield Terrace, Dunfermline. Alan Harper, IFMA adviser, will be in charge of the competition.

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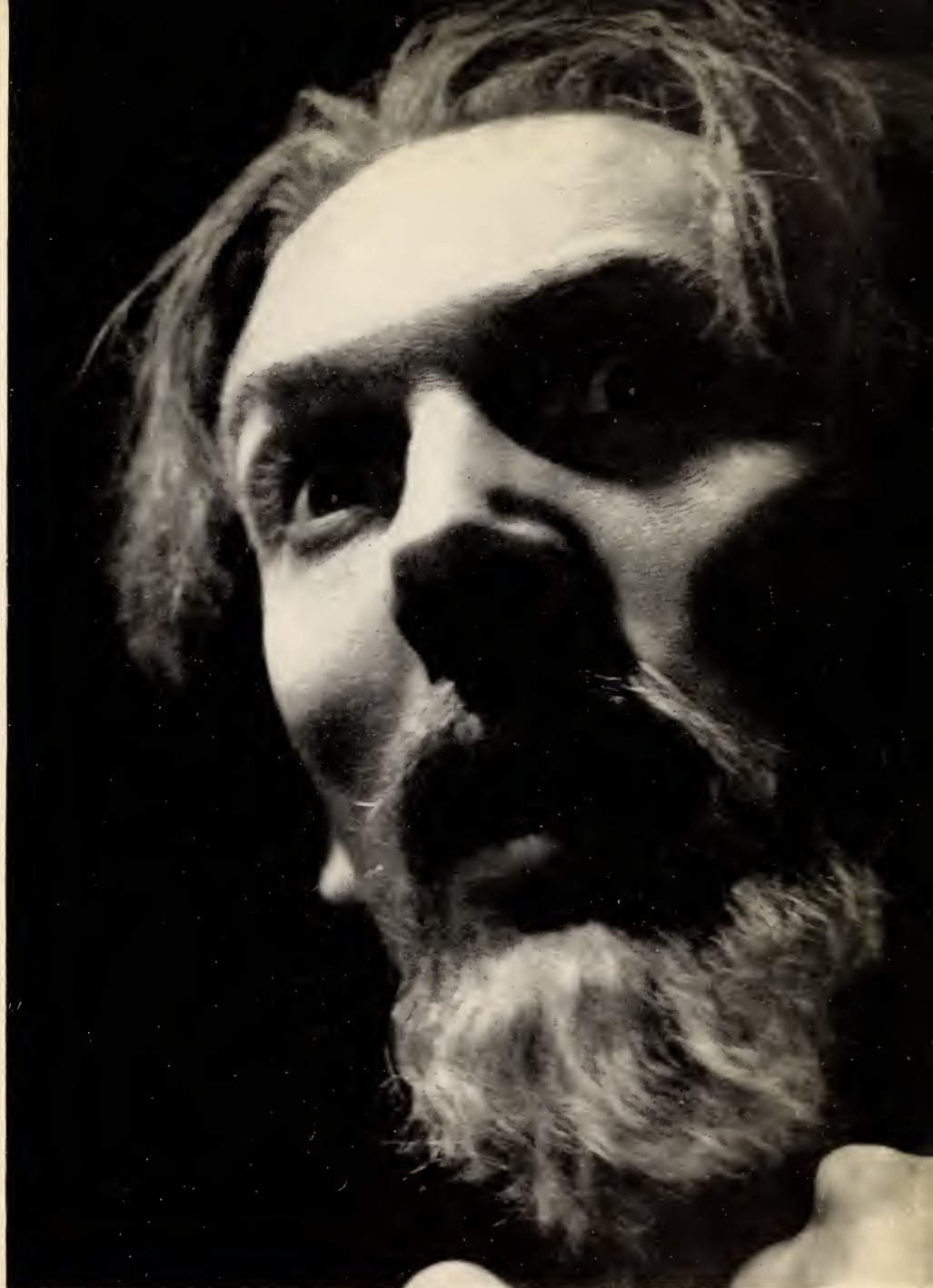
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CINEMA QUARTERLY

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

Volume 3, Number 4

SUMMER

1935

THE NEWS that George Cukor, director of *David Copperfield*, *Little Women*, and other box-office successes, has been given a new contract for three years, with a salary of approximately £50,000 a year, is being widely interpreted as an indication that the director is coming into his own and at last receiving the recognition that is his due. And, coupled with the fact that stars' salaries are steadily declining, the inference is that the studios are beginning to think that the picture matters more than the personality of the star, and that the man who makes the picture matters most of all.

The champions of the script writers, who believe that a good scenario—the theme, the idea, the purpose behind the film—is the most important creative force in production, will stoutly contest this argument. Others, with perhaps greater perception, will deplore the whole situation as farcical.

A good director is of immense value in interpreting the scenario in terms of plastic image, composition, movement, sound—always dependent, however, on the expert assistance of camera-man, art director, recordist, and the host of other specialist collaborators. The results of his labours we admire on the screen in proportion to the physical reaction of our senses. But the argument of the film, the deeper significance of its thematic qualities, its approach to reality, its philosophy, are the outgrowth of studio conferences and company policy. If the director has little claim to creative achievement, the scenarist, surveying the final form of his script, changed and distorted at the hands of numerous executives, has even less.

Are we, then, giving the director greater credit than he deserves? The answer—a frequent one in cinema—is yes and no. Actually the work of a capable director and the technical experts under his command is the only quality of value in the average commercial film. But so long as his efforts are based on present methods of scenario construction and producer interference it is foolish to magnify his importance beyond the limits of his power. The fact remains that no one at present is directly and finally responsible for a film as an artistic whole.

Unless the director can be given full control of production, with responsibility for the scenario, it would be wiser, instead of increasing his apparent but ineffective importance, to limit his scope to that of strict interpretation. With sound, music and colour playing increasingly important parts in production it is well-nigh impossible for the director to be master in every sphere, and the specialist, who must be artist as well as technician, is acquiring growing responsibility. Some one, necessarily, must take control of all these elements, weld them into a harmonious whole, fitting the director into his specialized niche alongside the musician, the colour artist, the camera-man, and so on. The obvious person for this task is the producer, whose apparently nebulous function has always been something of a mystery to the filmgoer and a recurring source of irritation to the serious film-maker. But to take charge of the artistic unity of a film the producer must be a very different person from the average studio executive concerned primarily with the financial returns of commercial investment. He must be himself an artist, able to visualise the film as a whole. He must be the heart, the soul of the film. Whoever else constructs the scenario, he it is who must conceive it, give it life. He must be able to play on the talents of his specialists as a musician plays on the keys of a piano.

When a director is elevated to such a position only then can he claim to be the creative genius of the film.

Yet would the appearance in the studios of this new type of creative producer materially alter the character of production? If we believe with Arnheim that the artist has already been reduced to absolute subservience to the grossest of commercial ends, it is obvious that the film, instead of developing in artistic significance, will remain as a social phenomenon of greater danger than value to mankind. But though the abject dependence of the craftsman is obvious and deplorable, it need not be concluded that the basis of production will not alter nor that the means and methods of film-making will not undergo vital changes. Only so long as no one has the final responsibility for the measure of a film's worth—only so long as the director is sufficiently swollen with pride and salary to accept a puppet position of authority—will the present tendency continue.

In the independent documentary field the producer has already proved the artistic necessity of his presence. Without question it is even more necessary in the studios. But how is the new role to be created? As a result of the increasing complexity of production the studios, either unwillingly or blindly, may themselves create the opening. Or the new movement to increase the importance of the director's position may give such artists as have the necessary abilities and strength of character the opportunity of seizing

power. True, the present financial reward of subservience is so great that all but the strongest minds are tempted to accept the situation with luxurious complacency. But with the growing recognition of the potentialities of the film new men will enter cinema, not in quest of lucre but to satisfy their artistic urge or their social conscience. A change in the character of studio personnel might readily pave the way for revolutionary changes.

To accept the present structure of cinema as inevitable and final is a defeatist attitude. To pretend that it is other than it is, or that it is not inimical to worth-while achievement is either hypocrisy or stupidity. Whether we are interested in the æsthetics of the cinema or in its social implications we must face the situation free of cant or illusions. The constructive criticism of laymen and the forward Æsopian tactics of film-makers must all be directed courageously towards moulding a freer, a more rational system of production which will enable the artist to be honest with himself and sincere in his aims.

NORMAN WILSON.

C.Q. AND WORLD FILM NEWS

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

A FURTHER advance in the development of "Cinema Quarterly" will take effect in the Autumn, when the paper will appear in an entirely new form.

Arrangements are being made for a well organised INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE from the world's principal centres of production.

The new publication, which will appear MONTHLY, will be a clearing-house for all the latest information on the films and film people that matter, and will be in general a forum for theory and criticism.

Hans Feld, formerly editor of the Berlin "Film Kurier," the most famous film paper in Europe, has joined the editorial board.

The management of "Cinema Quarterly" have adopted this progressive policy in deference to the needs expressed by both film workers and film societies throughout the country.

WORLD FILM NEWS AND CINEMA QUARTERLY will supply an essential service of international importance. It will be something new in film journalism and will be supported by authoritative contributions from leading film-makers and critics throughout the world.

TWO PATHS TO POETRY

JOHN GRIERSON

THE MOST interesting event in recent months was, for many of us, the arrival of Paul Rotha's *Shipyard*. I shall not pretend to review it, for I am too close to these films to worry about the particular value of this or that. What concerns me, and I hope some others, is where they are leading. In documentary we are in course of making not individual films or individual reputations, but new ways of looking at the life about us. We are bringing new material to the imagination. Movements, and schools of approach, are everything. And there is something sufficiently distinct in Rotha's work to mark it as a separate tendency: distinct at once from the romanticism of Flaherty, which all the young men have now respectfully discarded, and from the hard-boiled and certainly more academic realism of the G.P.O. group. I shall try to analyse this Rotha quality and estimate it.

Forget all about Rotha's writing when you consider him as a film-maker. He is, as every student of film appreciates, our film historian; and he is the keeper of our conscience as much as the keeper of our records. On questions of film movements and film influences of the past he is an analyst of quality.

As a creator of film he happens to be none of these things. The history of his subject matter does not concern him nearly so deeply as its good looks in still and tempo. Analysis of his subject matter—of the influences which affect it and the perspectives of social and other importance which attend it—is not so important to him as the general impression it gives. For lack of a better title I should call him an *impressionist*.

The other day Clive Gardiner, the artist, was asked to do a painting of that grand machine which twists wires and makes cables. He told me afterwards that what he went for was the feeling of electricity and that in fact he "painted the shimmer of the thing." So did Monet; so did all the other impressionists; and brilliantly, as anyone who has seen the new Monet rooms in Paris will testify. Great mural stretches there are, four to the immense oval of each room, pouring into the subdued light the deep shimmer of trees and pools and waterlilies. This was impressionism, till the old tough Cézanne broke into the shimmer, teased out the forms again and gave them solid structure. No one, however, in noting the change

of attitude, could deny the separate and authoritative inspiration which impressionism represented.

Many of us, brought up in the post-impressionist revolt, have made structure our god. "Observe and analyse," "know and build," "out of research poetry comes," were the slogans we set before us. They suited the academic and the radical in our minds. They brought us more readily to the new material of our times.

I have watched with some closeness the working of these influences in the films of Wright, Elton and Legg. All are painstakingly and rather proudly academic. When they shoot a factory, say, they learn how to ask the right questions. Elton, for example, knows more than a little about railways and mechanics; Wright has mastered the history of every subject he has touched; and I will swear that Legg knows more about the organisation of the B.B.C. than any outsider decently should.

Critics have not failed to notice the tendency. "Close Up," that ancient citadel of the aesthetes, spotted it from the first. In æsthetic righteousness they deplored this concentration on the didactic. They sniffed a long and authoritative sniff at the pedagogic in art. With equal sniff but less authority the boys and girls of "film art" followed them. I, for one, always liked the criticism for, so far as it goes, it means well and means rightly. The only point at which art is concerned with information is the point at which "the flame shoots up and the light kindles and it enters into the soul and feeds itself there." Flash-point there must be. Information indeed can be a dangerous business if the kindling process is not there. Most professors are a dreary warning of what happens when the informationist fails to become a poet.

But note the reverse of the argument. Information there must be or there is nothing to kindle. New information there must be or we are kindling to no purpose. And that is the task and the danger these others have set themselves.

If they have not always found an æsthetic flash-point in their researches into the social and economic structure, they have at least been looking for it. I remember when Elton's *Aero Engine* came out, how these very critics lit on the last reel of flight. It was a poem, they said, but why all the laborious business before about aero engines? They missed the point and missed it twice. In the first place any fathead could make a poem of flight, but it was a more difficult and more necessary thing to make a poem as Elton did of the making of the mould. For many of us, there is no depth to the poetry of flight unless the making and the moulding are realised behind. The smoke at the chimney stack is one thing and a fit vision for children. The smoke above the furnace is something else.

And again a point. Analysis itself, if it be fine enough and

affectionate enough, will sometimes achieve a flash-point by its very affection. The making of a mould is as fair an example as any. There have been more ambitious sequences of furnace work, rhythmised and tempo'd to beat the band. They are all—Ruttman's, Flaherty's, Iven's, Rotha's and my own—vulgar in comparison.

So much for the informationists and what they represent. Rotha's *Shipyards* brings us back with something like full measure to the old position—for impressionism and against analysis, for art and against information, and no one will say his case is not finely made. The other people were critical and had no creative power to back them, though they very plaintively tried. Rotha is certainly creative. He comes equipped with a great splendour of camera work. He has a force and fervour of tempo'd description better than anything before him, for he has known how to use sound to intensify his impressions. He joins with the other school in his industrial background and sociological implication and, if he had freedom, his sociological implication would be even plainer than was permitted in *Shipyards*. In these matters Rotha is certainly on the side of the gods.

Yet, when the splendid flurry is done, are the bones of the ship in the film—are the wash and the width of the sea it will sail? Is the man who planned her there?—are the orders he gave?—is the shaping of the ship to the blue print of his knowledge and purpose? Does the fo'c'sle head rise high with purpose willed and form made to a purpose? Is it enough to make a poem of men hammering and building and forget the precision of a rivet?

The energies are certainly there, caught, indeed shimmering, among the rising ribs of the colossus. The voices are there, in broken scraps of calls and conversation. The tools are there in hot bursts of riveting and beating and turning. Something of the town behind them is there and the houses they came from, and the unemployment they will go back to when the job is done, and something, too, of their thoughts. A great deal is there: shimmering all of it as the sunlight of fine photography flashes across plate and hammer and screw. But—and I ask this detachedly that the case may be understood—is it really a ship that goes down to the sea or only a hunk of art? The case of the others is that the art is better if it is also a ship.

In any case it is of the greatest value that Rotha should reach out separately in this way, and of the greatest importance that his growing point should prosper. It may be that two separate arts are involved and that we must look to the development of both. The one is cold and, with power, may yet be classical; the other is rhetorical and may yet, with power, be romantic. But this is certain: in our realistic cinema, all roads lead by one hill or another to poetry. Poets they must all be—or stay forever journalists.

THE NEW DEAL AND THE AMERICAN FILM

F. D. KLINGENDER

THE FRIGHTENED bourgeois retires to a dream world in his leisure moments to escape from the terrors of a reality filled with the battle-cries of contending classes. He is left to speculate on the abstract attributes of that fictitious shadow "man in general." This shadow without substance moves in a phantom world of abstract emotions and passions, hopes, ambitions, disappointments and successes.

The films produced in Hollywood up to the end of the Hoover presidency played all the possible variations of this seductive tune. We can understand the shock to a public for whom this type of subject appeared as the only possible one for a film, when the basic class reality of modern existence was for the first time unmasked in the post-revolutionary Russian film.

Before 1932 the occasions when American producers discarded the Hollywood wish dream sphere in favour of a subject even remotely connected with social reality were exceedingly rare. Films such as *Five Star Final*, and especially *I am a Fugitive from the Chain-Gang*, exposing some particular example of social injustice with passionate sincerity, were altogether exceptional.

All this, however, rapidly changed with the advent to power of the Roosevelt regime, the function of which was the extraction of American capitalism from the extreme depths of the crisis. To understand the changes that have occurred in the American film since that time it is necessary first to appreciate the significance of their economic and political background.

The crisis had hit America with full force after a protracted period of illusionary prosperity which appeared to vindicate the claims of super-capitalism to have within itself the possibility of providing a prosperous existence for all.

The first phase of the crisis, before Roosevelt was elected, rudely shattered this illusion and brought unparalleled distress to an immense number of people who had previously accepted it for gospel truth.

The first task of the Roosevelt administration was, therefore, the deflection of mass indignation, then at its highest, from a criti-

cism of the capitalist system as such to that of particular aspects of that system, such as banking, market speculation, etc.

N.R.A., the great campaign embodying this policy, achieved its initial popularity through the wide measure of apparent social criticism which it contained. Having succeeded in its primary aim of converting mass opposition into support for the new administration and its head, the Roosevelt campaign gradually changed its character in subsequent years. As ever larger numbers of workers were disillusioned, as an unprecedented strike wave began to sweep the country, the demagogic mask ceased to serve its purpose, and the true class character of the regime appeared undisguised.

I shall attempt to show that this basic reality is reflected with astonishing clarity in the American film of the last few years. It appears very doubtful whether the changes that have occurred in the character of these films can be explained otherwise than by reference to this reality.

The first thing to note is the sudden and most surprising intrusion of the social problem into the fantastic realm of the Hollywood film that occurred shortly after Roosevelt was elected to the presidency. This intrusion was not confined to the sphere of one or two highbrow films, but, on the contrary, was most pronounced just in those films that were destined to appeal to the masses.

I shall select a few examples at random to illustrate this point.

The "Wild Western" was, almost from the inception of the film, one of its most popular subjects. In the *Massacre* this well-worn cliché suddenly assumed a startling new form. The Indians of this film are no longer the romantic warriors of the schoolboy adventure story, but the wretched, universally exploited survivors of a once vital race found in the Indian reservation areas of the United States of to-day. The hero is no longer the scalp-hunting chief, but a young Indian earning his livelihood as a trick rider at the Chicago World Fair.

This hero returns to his native home, and the astonished spectator is, from that moment, presented with a hair-raising series of actions showing the most callous, brutal, and hypocritical exploitation of the Indians by the government administrator who cheats them of their property rights, the doctor who utterly neglects them, and the undertaker who forges their wills and rapes their daughters, while the priest conducts a farcical burial ceremony for their fathers.

Needless to say, the bravery and valour of the hero is now displayed in fighting this racket. In the course of this struggle he assaults the undertaker, who has raped his sister, and is placed under arrest by the government official. He contrives, however, to escape with the help of the heroine, who, of course, is a beautiful Indian

girl, and after various adventures reaches Washington. The first shot of his arrival shows him jumping off a freight car and facing a N.R.A. poster on the wall of a station shed, over which the dome of the capitol is visible.

In Washington he finds a true friend and the future saviour of his down-trodden people: the supreme official for all Indian reservations, whose self-sacrificing struggle for the rights of his exploited wards has so far been frustrated on every side by the graft and iniquity of the powerful interests who are opposed to his aims.

The case of our hero provides this official, for the first time, with tangible proof on the basis of which he can proceed to clear up this morass of graft and iniquity.

The description so far given of this film would suffice to indicate its character, were it not that one exceedingly important point of the Roosevelt campaign is put across in a highly effective manner in the subsequent section of the story. For, while the senate inquiry initiated by our hero's friend is in progress, the assaulted undertaker dies of the wounds inflicted by the hero, who is thus taken back to the reservation area in order to face a murder trial. Everything depends on the production of his sister as a material witness, and, of course, this girl is kidnapped by the racketeers. Once this becomes known, the Indians, who have been roused from their previous lethargy by the fight put up on their behalf by their countryman, gather their forces and storm the gaol. But at this point the hero, once he is released, uses his entire influence to persuade them of the folly of mass action, arguing that, by taking this course, they merely expose themselves to the machine-guns of the authorities. He then proceeds, with the help of his faithful attorney, to look for his kidnapped sister.

Naturally she is found in the end. The corrupt officials and racketeers are duly punished and the hero is installed as the new, honest, administrator for the reservation area—after which it is clearly his duty to marry the heroine.

This most exciting film, built up with all the speed and tension of the Hollywood thriller, thus put a number of very important points of Roosevelt's propaganda campaign across wide masses of cinema-goers. By selecting the economically entirely insignificant group of exploited people represented by the Red Indians, it could safely go to extreme limits in showing the full degree of their exploitation. Imagine the results if its subject had been the American Negro—not to mention the white working class. . . .

The suffering of these people is shown to be due, not to any inherent feature of the social system in which they are forced to live, but to corruption and graft on the part of influential racketeers. The solution of their ills can be brought about by a strong man

who places honesty and love for his country above private gain; at the same time it is folly for the exploited to fight for their freedom. Patience and trust in official leadership are the only safe means open to them.

I have described this film at some length, because it is a first-rate example of a highly skilful propaganda film. While not all the films of the first Roosevelt era were as skilful and effective in their propaganda technique, the basic propaganda character of their overwhelming number was, nevertheless, patent for all to see.

It is sufficient to mention films such as *Dangerous Age*, dealing with the problem of America's "wild boys" tramping through the length and breadth of the American continent in a vain search for work. Again the subject is treated with astonishing frankness, though, of course, not with the same brutality as in the case of *Massacre*. But from the propaganda point of view *Dangerous Age* is a much less skilful film than *Massacre*, since the end, in which the heroes of the story are rescued by a benevolent magistrate who finds jobs for them, is so obviously out of tune with the picture drawn by the remainder of the film that it can scarcely be convincing even for the most unsuspecting.

On a different level the spectacular Fox chorus girl show, *Stand Up and Cheer*, belongs to the same category of Roosevelt propaganda films. The story, which provides the skeleton for the series of Hollywood parties and revue scenes characteristic of the "musical comedy" type of film, is in this case that of a new official who has been entrusted with the organisation of a big "Joy Trust," in order to dispel the gloom of the crisis with lavishly organised entertainments. The story of the film is the story of the fight between this official and the powerful vested interests in the entertainments rackets who, of course, employ every means to frustrate the fulfilment of his task. Needless to say, he defeats these sinister influences after many adventures, puts over a grand show, turns the universal gloom into optimism, and thus enables the country to turn the corner towards prosperity.

Altogether incomparable with any of these pictures were a number of exceedingly interesting films also produced during the first phase of the Roosevelt presidency films, the obvious aim of which was a scarcely veiled criticism of capitalist society. I am referring to a number of James Cagney and William Powell films, in which these actors represent racketeering business men with astonishing cynicism.

The first Mae West film, with its glorious demolition of the last fragments of bourgeois morality, belongs to the same group. All these films are objectively an expression of a genuine left wing criticism of present day society. They were allowed to pass by the

American censorship authorities in view of the concessions necessary to left wing feelings in those years.

No one who has seen American films, even if only occasionally, can have failed to notice the decisive change in their character that has taken place during the last eighteen months or so, and that has completely altered the picture so far described. The first and most striking change is the abrupt disappearance of the genuine social criticism film. Could there be a more striking contrast than that between the first and the second Mae West films? You will remember the sheer delight of the scene in *I'm no Angel* in which Mae West in full war paint swaggers in syncopated jazz step across her room accompanied by her gargantuan negro maids. In *Belle of the Nineties* the negro maid has become the saviour of her mistress's soul, for she is asked by the star to pray for her at a revivalist meeting!

Those who see in this change merely the result of the so-called purity campaign, will find it difficult to account for the no less striking change which has come over the Cagney pictures released during 1934. If in the earlier films the gangster racketeer was assuming the unmistakable features of the capitalist business man as such, this clarity and precision of outline has entirely vanished in the later films (e.g. *He was her Man*). With it has vanished, as in the case of Mae West, all the vitality and tempo of the earlier productions.

If we turn from the left wing to the centre and right, the changes found are equally significant. They can be characterised as changes from extreme social demagoguery over an intermediate stage of mystical hero-worship back into the sphere of bourgeois "entertainment" proper, the sphere of love, hate, adventure, success, etc., in the abstract, without any trace of social reality.

The intermediate stage is characterised by films, the objective basis of which is the problem of fascism. It is highly significant that the attitude of the producers to this problem as presented in these films imperceptibly changes from that of criticism to more or less open support. The series *Duck Soup*, *Viva Villa* and *Cat's Paw* illustrates this transition.

Characteristically enough the present phase, in which the social problem has entirely vanished, as far as the intention of the producers is concerned, commenced with a rage for so-called costume pictures. The flight from social reality was thus initiated by an escape from the conditions of to-day into those of the past.

In the films released during the last few months the return to the realm of pure fancy is complete; but instead of its former delights that realm to-day spreads the ennui of a conjuring trick endlessly repeated after its secret has been exposed.

Note.—I attach without comment the following extracts from a review of the American film, *Night Life of the Gods*, taken from the London "Cinema"

"NIGHT LIFE OF THE GODS.—Once upon a time a famous author named Thorne Smith wrote a book, conceived in a moment of delicious delirium and written in a cuckoo clock. The first chapters convinced us he was crazy. The ensuing left doubt that possibly we were. . . . *Night Life of the Gods* brings a brand new type of humour to the screen, completely inconsequential in nature and as far removed from everyday life as the craziest nightmare. It has always been claimed for films that their chief function should be to take people out of themselves and to provide entertainment as different from the everyday routine as possible. I think that, to a great extent, this view is correct, and therefore I say without hesitation that, bearing this in mind, *Night Life of the Gods* is magnificent screen entertainment. To describe the film in a few words is impossible. As one American critic wrote, 'It is a picture that is completely but pleasantly goofy, with cast and director seemingly purposely insane, but with no one caring, as fun percolates from their antics.' That just about sums the picture up. It has an irresponsibly crazy air about it that is disarmingly delightful. It transports audiences to the wildest realms of fantasy where nothing at all matters."

Kinofilms have now reduced to sub-standard size, Alexander Room's famous film of the South American oilfields, *The Ghost that Never Returns*. This will be given a London premiere in the early part of September and will be available for booking from September 15. There will also be available shortly *October*, Eisenstein's famous film of the October revolution, Dovjenko's *Earth* and *Arsenal*, Ermler's *Fragrance of an Empire*, *Turksib* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, on 16mm. non-flam stock. Prices are now standardised at the rate of 4s. per reel per day, which brings the hire charge for these famous films to the same level as the ordinary films distributed by sub-standard libraries.

THE FILM CRITIC OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

IT HAS taken a long time for film criticism to develop into something other than the second string of the local reporter, or the dramatic or literary critic. What was lacking was expert knowledge, an æsthetic theory of the film and, in the case of the newspaper editor, the idea that film criticism might be something more than an editorial return for cinema advertisements. Then, when at last film criticism did get to work with its own ideas, i.e. ideas appropriate to the film, when it had reached a satisfactory intellectual level, and conquered a place in the newspapers equivalent to that occupied by dramatic and artistic criticism, the art of the cinema, after a brief period of blossoming, had begun once more to wither away, and to-day the chief error of the film critic is precisely that he judges films in the same way as his colleagues do pictures, novels and plays.

It is true that in the fifteen years or so during which the art of the cinema developed, it was unusual to find a true work of art, even in conception, but the film critic would, at that time, have had the opportunity of observing, of noting and of commenting on so rare, so exciting a process in its separate stages, so that his colleagues must have envied him that opportunity, even though in their own spheres long-standing artistic tradition ensured the production of works purer in aim and higher in standard. Here was a form of art in process of development. Here, from what was originally a purely mechanical method of photography, means gradually emerged of presenting the artistic quality of reality. And this experiment, the first of its kind, was so valuable for æsthetics that, at least to begin with, the experiment itself was far more important than the question, vital for the final judgment of the phenomenon, to what height the new art might be developed (whereby it seems to us that the question whether or not the cinema can be an art at all is wrongly framed and should be rather to what degree it can become an art).

Even if, in former days, there seldom appeared a pure work of art, whether as regards aim or achievement, at that time almost every new film meant, in a scenario motif, cutting or in lighting effect, an advance in the development of the new visual language, and to take note of this should have been the task of the film critic. But

film criticism in general was not ready for this, and so the opportunity passed by almost entirely neglected.

Artistic form is not a luxury, not an ornament nor an accessory, but serves to express the subject, the action; and so, because of the limitations imposed by the absence of speech, there had developed, in the film, artistic means of making plot, characterisation and background comprehensible through the eye. In this way they had arrived at a special kind of mute pantomime, at the transformation of inner motives of action into visible ones, at the creative resources of the film-camera, and at montage. With the advent of the talking film the need for the use of all these vanished.

And not merely the need, but, to a great extent, the possibility. Certainly there was now available, from the purely external, practical point of view, a more convenient and direct means of conveying information regarding plot, character, background; but word and picture was each in itself so comprehensive a means of representation that, used simultaneously, they could not supplement, but could only prejudice and mutilate one another.

The resulting development, the decline of the film as a means of artistic expression, is not yet complete. It, too, is exceedingly interesting from an æsthetic point of view, and is, therefore, worthy of closer attention from film critics. Points worth considering would be, how, under the influence of dialogue, movement loses its importance, individual scenes are drawn out and so montage falls into disuse; how the travelling camera tends to predominate, the actor usurps the scene, external action declines in favour of the spoken word. What the talking film has begun, the colour, the plastic, the supsize film and direct transmission of actual scenes by television will complete.

Unfortunately the majority of critics are unaware of this state of affairs. They realise that the cinema is artistically unproductive, but not that this is inevitable. They lay the blame on individual producers and directors as if the possibility of good talking-films really existed.

One of the tasks of the film critic of to-morrow—perhaps he will be called the television critic—will be to destroy the ridiculous figure cut by the average film critic and film theorist of to-day; he, like a seventy-year-old court actress, lives on the glamour of his memories; like her, he rummages among faded photographs, speaks of names that have long since vanished. With others like himself he argues about films which, for ten years or more, no one has been able to see, and about which, therefore, anything, or nothing, may be said; he discusses montage, as medieval scholars discussed the existence of God, and believes that all these things could exist to-day. In the evening he sits, reverently attentive, in the cinema,



From "B.B.C.—The Voice of Britain," a John Grierson Production.

Above—In the effects room at Broadcasting House.

Below—The control room.



Courtesy G.P.O.
Films and H.M.
Stationery Office



From "Amphitryon" a Ufa film directed
by Reinhold Schünzel.
The settings are by Herlth and Rohrig.
Camera: Fritz Arno Wagner.



playing the critical friend of art, as though we were still living in the time of Griffith, Stroheim, Murnau and Eisenstein. He thinks he is seeing bad films, instead of realising that what he sees is no longer a film at all.

All such theoretical studies would be splendid if they were consciously carried on as theoretical, or purely historical, research. They are ridiculous whenever, as usually happens, they are presented as models for modern film production. We know perfectly well that sometimes even now, and to-morrow the same will be true, in the hands of an advanced worker, of a seeker after documentary, a real film does come into existence. But the newspaper critic has to do not with such exceptions, but with the ordinary production of the day, and this can be subjected to æsthetic criticism only when, whether bad or good, it may, in principle, be included in the realm of æsthetics; i.e., when it has the possibility of creating works of art. Formerly good films differed from mediocre ones only in quality, to-day they are outsiders, relics, things essentially different in nature from what normally passes through the cinemas.

Many a critic, since write he must, takes refuge in irony, contents himself with a few jokes more or less good, and with detailed criticism of the acting. Is there nothing better for him to do? Undoubtedly there is! The film critic of to-day ought to bear in mind his second great task, a task laid upon him from the beginning, but for neglecting which he had, once at least, the excuse that æsthetic criticism could justly claim most of his space and interest. We mean the consideration of the film as an economic product, and as the expression of political and moral opinions.

Films are made by manufacturers as goods intended to bring in as large a profit as possible on what they cost; i.e., they must be so made that they find as many consumers as possible. Nevertheless, formerly one found frequent cases where the manufacturer allowed the artist, commissioned by him, a certain freedom in the choice of material and in the execution of the work, hoping that, because of, or in spite of this, the film would achieve financial success. But every business organisation aims at perfecting itself, at excluding uncontrolled factors, and so the film industry has, in course of time, reduced the artist more and more to a mere machine for supplying what the "producer" with his keen flair for "what the public wants" tells him to construct.

In all this we have in mind the most highly developed type of modern commercial film production, especially the American, and we are leaving aside, for the present, those cases where authorities, governments, organisations, etc., attempt to impose some other impulse on the commercial one. In industrialised production it is far more enlightening to know what company has made a film rather

than what director. Modern directors are less and less distinguishable from one another, and modern actors likewise.

The average film critic of to-day knows this state of affairs quite well in theory, but in practice he criticises the style of George Cukor, and becomes absorbed in the psychological peculiarities of Joan Crawford, without realising that these figures, even if nature should have endowed them with some degree of artistic originality, are condemned, at least in their practical activity, to absolute dependence. The director is reproached with having failed to bring out, in "his" scenario, the characteristic elements of the background. The combination of a particular director and a particular actor is considered as an artistically motivated event whose causes ought to be investigated and judged. In an essay, which appeared recently in a review and which certainly contained hints of the real connection between cause and effect, Mamoulian was blamed for having allowed himself to be influenced by the "innocent vanity" of Greta Garbo. Almost simultaneously there appeared, in a German newspaper, an interview in which Greta Garbo said: "You ask whether I am satisfied with the Christina film? No, not at all. How could you think that? If I had had any say in the matter it would have been quite different. But what one would like oneself is never realised. I shall never act the part of which I have dreamed." We are concerned here not with a defence of Garbo, but with the fact that such a film could not be made by director and actress, whether they consented and were enthusiastic about it, or whether they were repelled by it, and forced into it, in any but the way in which it was made. The only general reproach which might be made against an artist is that of binding himself to such methods of production. To judge a film as the free work of artists, like a novel or a painting, when nowadays even a queen among actresses may not settle at what angle her eyebrows are to be placed, conceals, in a harmful manner, the true state of affairs.

Equally inadequate is, for example, the fashion, widespread at present, of criticising historical films. Variations from historical truth are pointed out, and the author of the script, director or producer is judged as if he had failed to study his sources properly, or as if, whether from pure caprice, from misunderstanding, from lack of objectivity, or possibly from the wish to further some special artistic or scientific idea, he had departed from the truth, he is criticised just as the author of an historical novel or play, or of a scientific historical work would be criticised. In reality the producer, advised by experts and supplied with excellent documents, probably knows the historical circumstances better than the critic, and has not the slightest intention, in the construction of his film, of giving rein to his whims, his lack of understanding or his personal

views. A factory is no place for such passions. Every alteration of history is, rather, exactly like every alteration in the film version of a novel or play, a carefully calculated economic measure intended to make the film more suitable, more attractive, more interesting, more magnificent, more exciting for the public. In these films there is far less caprice than in the works of many an artist or man of science. They are made according to well-tryed rules, and, from the outline of the plot to the gestures of the hero, everything is subservient to the same end.

As long as the critic is ignorant of this, or remains silent on the subject, his criticism is worthless. It is worthless as long as he continues to distribute praise and blame in individual instances and to individual persons, without realising that films become what they are because of certain general laws.

First law: The talking-film as a means of representation, excludes the possibility of artistic form.

Second law: Films are made as a commercial proposition, in such a way that they may sell as well as possible.

Third law: The film is less the expression of individual opinion than of general political and moral views.

In connection with this third point, we must add that, in those countries which are governed according to a definite doctrine, the governments of to-day emphasise, in a most useful manner, the political and moral content of the film. Unhappily the film critic does not yet adequately support them in this. He fails to see, for example, that the average American film, which appears to him merely artistically negligible and silly, becomes extremely interesting as soon as one regards it as characteristic of what appeals to the masses.

Whether a film is intended by the producer to appeal to the mind of the people, or whether, under the influence of the authorities, it is employed as a means of propaganda or of education, it must always be the task of the film critic, to-day as well as to-morrow, to analyse its content, and to assess, positively or negatively, its value.

The film is one of the most characteristic means of expression and one of the most potent influences of our age. In it not only individuals but nations, classes, forms of government play an active part. The critic of to-day, unfortunately, continues, all too frequently, to act as if the cinema were a small luxury theatre in which a few independent artists are acting for a limited number of people interested in art. Such a critic of to-day belongs, alas, to yesterday.

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET CINEMA—II

MARIE SETON

THE optimistic and liberal vein of Dinamov's speech, which represented the official Communist view at the Moscow Cinema Conference in January, was a signal that the cinema workers could and even should express some frivolity in their films. With the improved material conditions Soviet audiences have developed a desire to be entertained as well as educated by the cinema. Romance is no longer bourgeois, love is an eligible theme in place of being an occasional decoration to the one of socialist construction. Handsome actors playing romantic Red soldiers and attractive blondes are replacing natural types; characters are individual rather than typical. Humour is an important component of story pictures.

The first director to speak at the conference was Eisenstein; he was stating his position publicly for the first time since his return from Mexico.

He divided the history of the Soviet cinema into three periods:

1917-22.—The few films made were under the influence of the theatre. 1922-29.—The period of the epic films which were based on montage and the use of natural types. Since 1929—

Eisenstein considered that during the second period movement sometimes became the content of the picture. Technical virtuosity was characteristic of the period. The use of natural types—typage—was developed because the cinema was in the hands of the technical intelligentsia who became infatuated with the masses and, therefore, thought that typage was the most actual way to represent a class from whom they were apart. "We may criticise all the tendencies," said Eisenstein, "but every tendency is the tendency of the period itself."

He analysed various pictures and stories, including *The American Tragedy*, which he conceived as a study of the negative twentieth-century man. He showed how ideas profitable to capitalism could be embodied in exotic stories and the nineteenth century thrillers of Fennimore Cooper. He spoke of form and content, citing the film *Counterplan* in which the white nights had been effectively used to heighten the tension of the love scenes and how inseparable form

and content were among primitive people, illustrating that by the Polynesian tradition of opening all the doors and gates during a confinement in order that the surroundings should assist the action.

"Our knowledge of composition is very poor," he continued. "Some people think it is sufficient to make pictures; but we must find expressive things. In the intellectual cinema there was form and content, though we had too many isms and these isms wanted the monopoly of art. My art is dedicated to no particular tendency, but to the analysis of certain phenomena and ways of thinking."

Eisenstein concluded by saying that he felt that at present Soviet art and architecture shows an inclination to return to the classical while everywhere there are signs of synthesis and a demand for greater artistic value.

Trauberg, co-director with Kusnetsov of the films *Alone*, *New Babylon*, and *The Youth of Maxim*, was the next to speak. He demanded that Eisenstein should put his theories into practice, declaring that cinema theory is not a matter of scholastic articles, but the struggle between one group of cinema directors and another. He considered that the film magazines were not serious enough, and that some of the articles appearing in them were a museum of fantastic illusions. He attacked formalism, saying that the only way to be rid of that bugbear was to produce pictures.

In Trauberg's opinion, Eisenstein's division of the Soviet cinema into three periods was too conventional, and though he agreed that 1924-29 was the great period of the Soviet cinema, he considered that during those years many mistakes had been made. He criticised the lack of character in Pudovkin's hero of his St. Petersburg film, and Dovzhenko's unconvincing hero in *Arsenal*. He condemned what he called "the stupid poetry" of the period—Eisenstein's "side-lines" in *October*, the palaces and statues, the obviousness of *General Line* and Pudovkin's shots of moulded ceilings and statues at the end of *St. Petersburg*.

And of the cinema since 1929, Trauberg discussed a number of interesting but imperfect pictures which are unlikely to be seen abroad. Of his own work with Kusnetsov, Trauberg said that, during the making of their last film, *The Youth of Maxim*, they had solved many problems in spite of the fact that they were obliged to alter the script during production. He felt they had rid themselves of formalism, and thought the method of setting the individual against the social background of the period quite satisfactory. He deplored the attitude of people who consider all historical pictures as bad and those with contemporary themes as good; though most discussions centred on films with contemporary subjects, the Soviet cinema had in actual fact mainly utilised historical material. In the future Trauberg felt that he and Kusnetsov must deepen the meaning of

their work and pay more attention to detail. He said they were averse to obvious technique. The greatest tribute paid to *The Youth of Maxim* (an historical picture) was Pudovkin's when he said he felt that the fields would soon belong to the collective farm, and his opinion was echoed by a group of young workers. "That," said Trauberg, "is the emotion we wanted to create."

Another young director who spoke was Utekevitch, collaborator with Ermler on the film *Counterplan*. He belonged, he said, to the second generation and came to represent the great army of cinema workers. "I don't think," he said, "that the Soviet cinema is only made up of heroes like Eisenstein and Dovzhenko." Like others, in the early days, he had found it difficult to get into contact with his audience; he had thought them stupid and in need of being raised to Flaubert's "ivory towers." The intelligentsia had failed to understand the political aim of the cinema and that all art is fighting. He liked American pictures because they appealed to a great public, for in the best meaning of the word the cinema is a popular branch of art.

Utekevitch, being one of the first directors to see the importance of cinema actors as opposed to natural types (*Counterplan* is largely an actor's picture) analysed Pudovkin as a delineator of character, saying that *Mother* was comprehensible to everyone because it was a picture about people. In *St. Petersburg* Pudovkin's style changed and real people became symbols, then he denied the necessity of the scenario and later actors gave way more and more to natural types; finally, in *The Simple Case*, Pudovkin created a new theory, the importance of the cadre. In *Deserter*, Utekevitch felt that Pudovkin only expressed human emotions for one moment—the scene in which the German widow cries when she is elected as a worker delegate.

Because he is mainly concerned with the making of films requiring professional actors, Utekevitch spoke of the training of special film actors. He felt that the role of the actor is most important, for if they lack understanding and experience they can change the whole idea of the film. Though every Soviet director has an individual method of working with actors (and it is one of the most difficult branches of their work) there is actually very little theory in regard to cinema acting itself. There is also the relation of camera-men to actors; Utekevitch found that in his experience very few Soviet camera-men could shoot men's behaviour, which he felt to be more dynamic than inanimate things.

Utekevitch ended his speech by estimating the value of Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and Eisenstein to the second generation of directors. Of Pudovkin he said that when he and his generation criticised him they were struggling for and not against him. He

felt that there was danger in making Dovzhenko a model, for his particular way of creating films was peculiar, while his ideas were sometimes better than his work. He wished to fight for the genius expressed in Eisenstein's pictures, but he felt that Eisenstein, the teacher and theoretician, was often at fault. His speech was full of unproved theories and his work lay only in the laboratory; and lastly practical Utekevitch considered that Eisenstein was not close enough to reality. Turning to him he said something to the effect that "You are richer than all of us, but you are sitting on your own gold." Eisenstein, who was acting as chairman, merely smiled.

The most important speech of the conference because it combined theory with practice was Dovzhenko's, which will be summarised on a later occasion.

THE FILM ABROAD

DR GOEBBELS' SEVEN PRINCIPLES

AT THE closing session of the International Film Congress, 1935, Dr. Goebbels, the German Minister for Public Information and Propaganda, delivered an address on the specific laws of film art, in which he enumerated the following seven principles ruling German cinematography:

1. The film, like every other form of art, has its own laws. It is only by obeying these laws of its own that it will be able to preserve its true character. These laws are not derived from the stage. The primacy of the stage over the film must be broken. Stage and film each speaks its own language. What is still tolerable in the dim light of stage scenery is completely unmasked in the glaring light of the Jupiter lamps. It is an artistically vital question for the film to break away from stage tradition and stand on its own feet.

2. The film must shake off the vulgar insipidity of a mere form of amusement for the masses, but in doing so it must not lose its strong inner connection with the people.

3. This does not mean that it is the function of the film to serve the purposes of a colourless æstheticism. On the contrary, it is just because of its unprecedentedly far-reaching range that it, more than all other forms of art, must be popular art in the best sense of the word. But, popular art must present in artistic form the joys and sorrows that affect the great masses. Hence the film must not

stand aloof from the hard realities of the day, nor lose itself in a dreamland only existing in the imaginations of unpractical producers and scenario writers living in a non-existing world.

4. There is no art that is self-supporting; material sacrifices made to art are repaid by it ideally. For every government it is a matter of course to finance great state buildings in which the architectural creative will of a period is immortalized in stone; it is a matter of course to subsidize theatres in which the tragic and comic passions of this period are represented; it is a matter of course to establish galleries in which the pictorial cultural possessions of a people are housed. It must be just as much a matter of course for every government to secure the artistic existence of the film by material sacrifices, unless it gives up all idea of treating the film as art or of giving it a position as such.

5. The film must remain contemporary, in order to have a contemporary appeal. Although it may take and obtain its subjects for treatment from other countries and distant historical epochs, its problems must be adapted to the spirit of the period, in order to be able to address the spirit of the period.

6. The film, developed on these rules, will not separate but form a bond between the nations who, proud of their individuality, express this individuality in the film. It is a cultural bridge between the nations; it promotes understanding among them because it assists them to learn to know each other.

7. It is the function of the film to achieve its effects by its own inherent honesty and naturalness. Empty pathos is just as alien to it as the trashy theatre tricks with which it was heavily burdened by its stepmother, the stage, on its life's road, but which merely represent irksome baggage that does not belong to it. The honest and natural film which gives animated and plastic expression to our period can become a valuable means for the building up of a better, purer and more realistic world of artistic possibilities.

If these fundamental principles are observed in the film, it will conquer the world as a new artistic manifestation. It will then be the strongest pioneer and the most modern spokesman of our age.

In the light of Dr. Goebbels' manifesto it is interesting to consider Ufa's 1935-36 production schedule, since issued. Of the twenty-six feature films—planned to “relax, fascinate and entertain filmgoers”—at least eight are musicals or light comedies, seven are conventional love romances or dramas, one is a detective thriller, and one is a musical biography of Chopin. Five may or may not have a strong social content.

But whatever may be the value of the themes chosen under the new German film regime, there can be no doubt that the technical

quality and surface polish of current production is of a remarkably high standard. *Amphitryon*, a Stapenhorst picture directed by Reinhold Schünzel and featuring Willy Fritsch and Kathe Gold, is one of the most ambitious of recent films. It is a comedy and the action takes place in classical antiquity. In addition to everyday men and women of the period the cast includes gods and goddesses such as Jupiter, Mercury and Juno. It is particularly notable for the grandeur of the architectural settings designed by Robert Herlth and Walter Rohrig, and for the photography of Fritz Arno Wagner. The musical director is Franz Doelle, one of the best-known of the younger German composers. He has attempted something new in film operetta, and has made the characters use a sort of rhythmic speech-song. He adapts his music not only to the action but to the camera. Musical undertones and overtones are used to harmonise with and complement every shot without interrupting the rhythm of the musical score as a whole.

Wonders of Flying, a new Terra film featuring Ernest Udet, the famous German flying ace, contains an abundance of beautiful and thrilling shots. The film was photographed simultaneously from several angles—from the towering tops of ice-covered mountains and from a plane. In addition an automatic camera was mounted on Udet's machine. Weather conditions made production specially difficult. Round Zugspitzo high winds were encountered, with changes of temperature up to 30 degrees. Both cameras and camera-men were at times unable to work. In addition, scenery photographed one day would be ten feet under snow the next. Udet's dare-devil flying creates a thrilling spectacle on the screen.

One of Germany's most famous camera-men, Karl Hoffman, who photographed *The Nibelungs*, *Faust* and many of the early classics, has been made a director. At the Jofa studio he is at present at work on a new Minerva-Europa musical production, *The Primary Rules of Love*.

An important item of information is the news that Bernard Shaw has consented to the production of a German film version of *Pygmalion*. Jenny Jugo will take the part of Eliza, the flower girl, and Gustaf Gruendgens, of the Berlin Staats Theater, will play Professor Higgins.

THE AMERICAN SCREEN

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

THE SUMMER of 1935 will have been memorable in the cinema world, as such things go, for the introduction of colour in the feature film. *Becky Sharp*, from Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," with Miriam Hopkins, directed by Mamoulian, was the vehicle used to introduce colour to the screen in the same significant proportions that marked *The Jazz Singer* as the first talking picture. Whether the relative success of *Becky Sharp* (of course, we have already had no less significant colour in the short *La Cucaracha*, also devised by Robert Edmond Jones) strikes the death-knell of the black-and-white film, the next six months or so will tell. I think colour will supersede black-and-white—not because the present development of colour adds materially to a picture (in stories of to-day, with the characters in everyday street attire, there would be little difference, after a reasonable while, between colour and black-and-white to the spectator), but because after five or six years of the talking picture, the movie moguls of Hollywood will probably feel the time is ripe to introduce another novelty on the screen to inject new life-blood to the film. The colour film will, no doubt, give the movies a new impetus, whose momentum will carry it along for another five or six years until that novelty wears off—then, three dimensional films and television.

When Mamoulian allows for some movement in an otherwise static picture (such as in the whirling dancers at the Duchess of Richmond's ball, on the eve of Waterloo), the screen goes riotous with flaming scarlets, bright splashes of yellow and blue, soft greens and deep blacks with voluptuous visual beauty. Otherwise the colour tends to the chromo picture postcard variety, and in the long shots is actually blurred. Close-ups darken the faces to such an extent that the players (especially Miriam Hopkins) look like mulattoes. The intense light (twice as much as for the black-and-white film) playing on the heavy make-up (necessary for players in colour films) probably accounts for this. The screen has not by a far cry reached natural colour. *Becky Sharp* is still a *coloured* film, smacking of tinting. But for those moments when the primary colours smite the eye in bold splashes, the film is very much worth while seeing. As a film, it is better than *The Iron Duke* (which covers the same period), and if this is damning it with faint praise, let us hasten to add that Miriam Hopkins is always more enticing to the eye than George

Arliss—and she works ten times as hard as he does to help put a picture over.

I'm afraid, after all the expense and research made in colour for *Becky Sharp*, I still prefer Lee Garmes' lovely black-and-white photography in *The Scoundrel*. This is the latest Hecht-MacArthur picture which has set the critical boys on their ears in awe of so devastatingly sleek a picture. Here again the film's chief virtue is the novelty of Noel Coward's screen debut. The picture was written for him, and he lets Hecht and MacArthur's jewelled quips drop all about him in splendid and tantalizing confusion. Hence it has been called a "sparkling picture." It pretends to be a highly unmoral film until the end, when it goes moral (in a mystical epilogue) with all the passion of a negro revivalist meeting. In a film completely devoid of irony, it is indeed ironic to contemplate that the only warmth in the picture is in the touching performance of Julie Haydon, as the "good girl." The best line in the picture, when the young poetess (Julie Haydon) confesses her love of Keats and Proust and Shakespeare, is answered by the cynical publisher (Coward): "They lied every one of them. They lied first for fame or notoriety, then kept it up for royalties"—this, I think, is the best criticism of the picture. *The Scoundrel* substitutes the sophisticated quip for the banal wise-crack, balances unmorality with conventional morality. I am harsh with it only because it aims so high; even so, it rises disdainfully above the everyday run of movies and, at least, has been done with intelligence and impeccable taste. But with all its surface brilliance, it is a distinct let down for the creators of the ironic and superb *Crime Without Passion*.

Once in a *Blue Moon*, produced by Hecht and MacArthur between *Crime Without Passion* and *The Scoundrel*, is notable chiefly for the presence of Jimmy Savo, the inimitable Italian clown. The story is bad and direction surprisingly tepid. One hilarious sequence, concerning Savo's struggling conscience when confronted by a counterfeiting machine, is worthy of Chaplin at his best; but this, I think, is due more to Savo than Hecht and MacArthur. Some of the dialogue is charming, and often it is the tenderest thing imaginable. So completely devoid of guile and worldliness is it, that it folds its innocent props from underneath it and goes right to sleep in front of you. It will be remade in an attempt to salvage the fine performance of Jimmy Savo.

We have had colour, sophistication, charm; now, with tragedy and sex, the summer cycle is complete. The two outstanding examples have been *The Informer* for tragedy and *The Devil is a Woman* for sex. The former is by far the better film. Directed by John Ford from Liam O'Flaherty's story of that name, dealing with the Black and Tan period of Ireland's abortive rebellion, it starts slowly and

ominously in a pea-soup fog on a night in Dublin, when Gypo Nolan informed on his best friend to collect a twenty pound reward, so he could take his girl to America. Then follows a nightmarish sequence of Gypo's carousing about the town with his blood money (reminiscent in quality, in a minor way, to Joyce's famous night-town sequence in "Ulysses"), which ends up in Gypo's apprehension by his comrades and his extinction by a bullet as he attempts to escape from the monkey-court that tries him for his infamous betrayal. Victor MacLaglan performs mightily as Gypo Nolan. It is regrettable that Gypo's girl-friend was whitewashed in the film, because even a prostitute has no use for an informer in the story's milieu. Likewise the time of the incident was materially changed from the civil war period to that of the international guerrilla warfare.

The Devil is a Woman is either very subtle or just a very bad film. I haven't been able to make up my mind which. The last of the memorable Dietrich—von Sternberg cycle (which will go down in history as the twentieth-century Svengali-Trilby combination), it is visually the most beautiful and occasionally the dullest. Adapted from Pierre Louys' ironic comedy of Seville during carnival time, "Woman and Puppet," with a theme that is as ageless as it is pointed, notably that the "male of the species invariably comes back for more" (punishment) in the comedy of love, its thesis is the direct antithesis of *The Scoundrel*, for instance. Dietrich is incredibly lovely in the film, and von Sternberg has imparted to her a devastating sexual allure. Lionel Atwill and Cæsar Romero are puppets in a film which is all Dietrich. But you will remember the photography of Sternberg (he did the camera work himself), and Dietrich.

And, as proof that you can't keep a good man down, von Sternberg, having been given the sack by Paramount for *The Devil is a Woman*, is about to embark on a production (for another company) of no less an undertaking than Dostoevski's tortuous novel, "Crime and Punishment," with Peter Lorre as Raskolnikow.

As for the rest, perhaps the censorial activities contain most interest. Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* has been banned for its alleged anarchistic tendencies, and *La Maternelle* has had some two thousand feet cut—a stupid and impudent action, which is now being appealed. Paul Fejo's beautiful film, *Marie*, was also banned because "it makes a mockery of religion, the administration of justice and the action of respectable society, generally."

NATIONAL PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM

THE BELGIAN cinema has just had its first success with the film *De Witte*, produced by Jean Vanderheyden and Willem Benoy, and acted by a troupe of Flemish actors. Amongst the latter little Jefke Bruynincks has turned out a revelation and earned the nickname of the "Flemish Jackie Coogan." He plays the part of a mischievous and turbulent youngster imagined by the novelist Ernest Claes.

The interiors were shot in German studios, but there are also very beautiful landscapes taken in the Campine district of Belgium. Much of the plot, which is very simple, takes place in the open air.

It must be admitted that the direction is not quite perfect, but a popular success has been achieved and the public interested in a healthy and simple country story. The dialogue has a local colour which is greatly appreciated in Holland and Belgium.

The same producers have turned out *Alleen voor u* (*For You Alone*), the quality of which is not so good, being inspired by the international formula of the operetta, whereas the future of the Belgian production at the present time resides in a well-defined nationalism, such as allowed the Scandinavian cinema to assert itself after the war. At any rate this is the opinion of most of the critics.

Consequently a new attempt has just been made in this direction, also by Jules Vanderheyden. With the aid of the writer Ernest Claes, he has produced a kind of sequel to the famous novel of Charles De Coster, "The Legend of Thyl Uylenspiegel." This film is entitled *Thyl Uylenspiegel leeft nog* (*Thyl Uylenspiegel lives still*), and shows how the spirit of the famous hero continues and inspires imitators on Flemish soil.

Many of the pictures were shot at Damme, near Bruges, on the same site described in the book as being the birthplace of Uylenspiegel. This city has kept its middle age character. There is a beautiful church, town hall, and some houses which are artistic gems. It is to be hoped that the director of *Thyl Uylenspiegel leeft nog* has taken advantage of this picturesque element as well as of the local folk-lore. The post-synchronisation operations and interiors were done in Amsterdam.

As regards the French-speaking population, no efforts have yet been made, but it is hoped that Jacques Feyder, who is of Belgian origin, will come and turn several scenes of *La Kermesse Heroique* in Flanders, and that it will prove the starting-point for the further development of a national production of French expression in Belgium.

LUDO PATRIS.

FILM ARCHIVES

IN VIEW of the efforts now being made by the British Film Institute to establish a library of films of historical, cultural or educational value, it is interesting to learn what is being done in a similar direction by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It has received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the purpose of establishing a Department of Motion Pictures to be known as the Museum of Modern Art Film Library Corporation, with the following officers: John Hay Whitney, President; John E. Abbott, Vice-President and General Manager; and Edward M. M. Warburg, Treasurer. Iris Barry, formerly Librarian of the Museum, will be Curator of the Film Library. Because of lack of space in the building now occupied by the Museum, the Film Library will be located at 485 Madison Avenue.

The Film Library will undertake a number of activities, chief of which will be to assemble, catalogue and preserve as complete a record as possible, in the actual films, of all types of motion pictures made in America or elsewhere from 1889 to the present day; to exhibit and circulate these films, singly or in programme groups, to museums and colleges in the same manner in which other departments of the Museum now assemble, catalogue, exhibit and circulate paintings, sculpture, models and photographs of architecture, and reproductions of works of art. In addition, the Film Library will assemble a collection of books and periodicals on the film and gather other historical and critical material, including the vast amount of unrecorded data in the minds of the men who were either active participants or close observers of the development of the motion picture from its beginning. The Film Library also hopes to assemble a collection of film stills and a collection of old music scores originally issued to accompany the silent films. All the activities of the Film Library will be strictly non-commercial. There will be no charge for many of its services and the fee for its circulating exhibitions of films will be less than the cost of assembling and distributing the programmes to the colleges and museums. It will in no way compete with the film industry.

In announcing the newly organized Film Library, A. Conger Goodyear, President of the Museum, said: "The expansion of the Museum to include a department of motion pictures has long been contemplated. As our Charter states, the Museum is 'established and maintained for the purpose of encouraging and developing a

study of modern art.' The art of the motion picture is the only art peculiar to the twentieth century. As an art it is practically unknown and unstudied. Many who are well acquainted with modern painting, literature, drama and architecture, are almost wholly ignorant of the work of such great directors as Pabst, Pudovkin, or Seastrom, and of the creative stages in the development of men like Griffith and Chaplin, yet the films which these and other men made have had an immeasurably great influence on the life and thought of the present generation.

"This new and living form of expression, a vital force in our time, is such a young art that it can be studied from its beginnings; the 'primitives' among the movies are only forty years old. Yet the bulk of all films that are important historically or æsthetically, whether foreign or domestic, old or new, are invisible under existing conditions. To preserve these films and make them available to the public for study and research is the aim of the new Film Library."

John Hay Whitney, who is a Trustee of the Museum as well as President of the Film Library, has been very active in the preliminary survey made by the Museum during the past year to ascertain the possible response from the museums and colleges throughout America to the activities contemplated for the Film Library. This work was undertaken by John E. Abbott, who found that hundreds of colleges and museums were eager to avail themselves of the services proposed.

In commenting on the co-ordination of the work of the Film Library with colleges and museums, Whitney said: "It is estimated that seventy million people attend the movies every week in the United States. The very great influence of the motion picture in forming the taste and affecting the lives of the greater part of our population is well known. Despite the efforts the industry itself has made in this field, much remains to be done in arousing a critical, selective attitude toward the films in that part of the public most responsive to the arts—students, visitors to museums and art galleries, and the active group in each community which takes the leadership in cultural matters. The situation is as though no novels were available to the public except the current year's output or as though no paintings could ever be seen except those painted during the previous twelve months. As a consequence, whenever artistic standards and creative vitality have been achieved in individual movies they are soon lost to view. From time to time attempts have been made to remedy the lack of means for the study and preservation of the film. Efforts have been made in many communities both here and abroad to show new films of artistic merit which are not exhibited commercially, and to revive old films of interest. In most cases success has been only partial and the activity of short duration, as it has been almost impossible for any single

group to obtain the necessary films. To remedy this situation the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art has been established."

Among the first films to be acquired by the Museum is *The Great Train Robbery*, one of the earliest of the entertainment films, made in 1903 by an Edison camera-man, Edwin S. Porter. (Incidentally, another copy of this same film, discovered by C. A. Oakley of the Film Society of Glasgow, is also one of the first films to be included in the Film Institute library.) Another interesting acquisition is interesting as a record of the scientific curiosity and experiment that preceded the actual development of pictures that move. In 1872 Governor Stanford of California wanted to settle a bet as to whether or not a horse took all four feet off the ground at once when racing. He hired an ingenious photographer, Edward Muybridge, who had an engineer set up forty cameras along a race track. Wires operated the camera shutters, and as the horse passed each camera a separate picture was taken. These were not motion pictures, of course, in the true sense; they were simply a series of still pictures that analysed motion. Years later, in Paris, transparencies were made of these photographs and projected on a toy screen to refute criticism regarding the postures of horses painted by the French artist Meissonier.

Muybridge continued his photographic studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where the majority of his models were students or instructors; most of the women he photographed were artists' models. He used approximately the same method he had employed in photographing the racing horse for Governor Stanford, except that in his later work he operated only twenty-four cameras. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library has acquired a large portfolio of ninety of his photographic studies entitled "Animal Locomotion," which was published in 1887. Each study is composed of twenty-four individual photographs which record a segment each of continuous movement.

Also to be included in the Library is the famous "kiss" movie made by May Irwin and John C. Rice in 1896, when they were appearing on the Broadway stage in a play called "The Widow Jones." The play was famed for an osculatory scene of great length. An independent producer conceived the brilliant idea of turning that single scene into a motion picture. His studio was the roof of an office building on 28th Street, New York, where he had made a number of pictures. Edison sent a camera-man to take the picture, which consisted solely of the kiss and its two participants. Over the protests of whatever league was operating in the nineties to keep the world pure and proper, the picture was shown all over the country. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library copy of the "kiss" reel was found in a trash can in the Bronx.



From
Paul Rotha's
new film
"Face of Britain"
(Gaumont-British
Instructional).



Above—Harry Bauer in "Moscow Nights," directed by Anthony Asquith.
Below—A scene from René Clair's first English film "The Ghost Goes West." Both London Film productions.



COLOUR AND EMOTION

ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

LOVE of colour and susceptibility to colour is one of the strongest instincts in human beings. If you want to discover the most organic, basic elements of the sophisticated human being of to-day, go to children and go to savages. You will find that next to food, they love things of vivid colour and sparkle. That instinct is alive and strong in every one of us.

Once colour comes to the screen, we will be unhappy without it. It brings a new terrific power to motion pictures. So far, visually, we have been dealing with light and shade and compositions on the screen. Now the additional element of colour will serve not merely to superficially adorn the images in motion, but to increase the dramatic and emotional effectiveness of the story which is being unfolded to the spectator.

Apart from pure pictorial beauty and the entertainment value of colour, there is also a definite emotional content and meaning in most colours and shades. The artist should take advantage of the mental and emotional implications of colour and use them on the screen to increase the power and effectiveness of a scene, situation or character.

I have tried to do as much of this in *Becky Sharp* as the story allowed. As one example, I would refer to the sequence of the panic which occurs at the Duchess of Richmond's ball when the first shots of Napoleon's cannons are heard. You will see (at least I hope that you will) how inconspicuously, but with telling effect, this sequence builds to a climax through a series of intercut shots which progress from the coolness and sobriety of colours like grey, blue, green and pale yellow, to the exciting danger and threat of deep orange and flaming red. The effect is achieved by the selection of dresses and uniforms worn by the characters and the colour of backgrounds and lights.

There is a little of home-coming feeling in this for me as the use of colour and coloured lights was one of my main joys and excitement in the theatre. Surely, the effectiveness of productions like "Porgy," "Marco's Millions" and "Congai" which I have done in the theatre would have been sadly decreased if I were forced not to use colour in sets, costumes and lights on the stage.

Of course, in each art, different subjects are expressed best through different forms. Undoubtedly, there are some stories which beg for colour on the screen more than others. Off-hand, a story of a historical period of the past, when life and clothing were much more colourful, or stories with the backgrounds of countries like Spain and Italy, even of to-day, would ask for colour more than some stories of our modern age and civilization. The black and white films will still have their place on the screen, but most assuredly, as time goes by, there will be less of them and more of colour pictures.

Everything that is beautiful to the eye is a great gift to humanity. Colour on the screen is such a gift. The only danger of it that I can see during the first stages of the colour picture, would be the danger of excess. Talking pictures did not avoid it during the first months of their existence. There was too much talk and too much noise on the screen. The cinema must not fall into a trap and must not go about colour as a newly-rich. Colour should not mean gaudiness. Restraint and selectiveness is the essence of art.

FILM LECTURING IN CANADA

THE Canadian National Council of Education had an Italian and British week in 1933-34, but since the "British" week turned out to be English, and the Canadian Scots disapproved of this one-sided idea of Britain, they asked us this season to bring along a Scottish lecture and our films of crofter life, including *The Rugged Island*, and several shorts.

We started out in the Maritimes, visiting four university centres, Sackville, Halifax, Wolfville and Fredericton, and then were in every city by turn from Montreal west to Vancouver. We had taken our own projector to ensure a good picture every time, but it arrived smashed, so we had to depend on what was provided.

Time and again I was warned how sophisticated Canadian children are from five years old and up. I began to suspect I was being warned that I might expect noisy and unruly behaviour from schools. But I never found that. I had audiences ranging in size from 50 to 1250, and ages from seven to eighteen. Sophisticated they may seem in some ways, but not over animals and birds and the simple natural life of country people. I found all the school audiences enthusiastic.

Quite a number of schools and universities we visited were equipped with some kind of apparatus, from 16 mm to hand-

turned 35 mm. projectors. Teachers are becoming more and more keen on films in schools—but have difficulty in finding them, of course.

Our lecture tour ended in Vancouver in January. And after being held there ten days by a snowstorm such as had not been experienced for years, we managed to come East again on the first train that could get through.

On the prairies of Saskatchewan we joined Evelyn Spice, and there, in the few weeks we had left, we linked up and made a two-reeler, *Prairie Winter*.

It was often 20 degrees below zero, and we had to wear all we possessed, for we rode around the country in an open sleigh to get our subjects. But it was the camera that needed the most tender treatment, for without its hot-water bottle and several rugs, it would freeze up, run slow, and produce most ludicrous effects.

The film is simple. The prairie farmer loads up his sleigh with wheat and takes it to the elevator. On the way he passes the life of the countryside. His neighbours chop down bush for firewood, girls have to go off into a drift to let his load pass safely on the beaten down track, the school children are harnessing up ponies to their toboggans, or climbing on to their ponies to gallop home. The sleigh reaches the elevator in the small town, the load is emptied, and the farmer starts for home. A blizzard comes up quickly, and by the time the farmer reaches home he is hardly able to see fifty yards ahead of him.

Most of the sound was added, the talking and commentary by real honest-to-God Canadians, in the studio in London.

JENNY BROWN.

NEW BOOKS

HOLLYWOOD BY STARLIGHT. By R. J. Minney. (London: Chapman and Hall, 7s. 6d.) We may all be familiar with most of the facts in this amusing, sometimes ruthless, but mostly good-natured "revelation" of life within and without the studios, but Minney's analysis of the Hollywood mind is something rare and pungent. In retelling the apparently superficial encounters and incidents experienced during his sojourn in California for the filming of his play, *Clive in India*, he shows in many a succinct phrase that he has seen beneath the surface. His admiration for Chaplin—"the only real genius in the film world"—is unconcealed, and so, too, is his regard, on a different plane, for Darryl Zanuck, comet among producers. Some Goldwynisms which Minney recalls are

worth repeating. "The fella's a liar. All he says you gotta take with a dose of salts——" "You can include me out of it." "It was a complete carriage of misjustice." Amusing as they may be they are not untypical of the mentality that controls the American film industry.

HOW TO ENTER THE FILM WORLD. By E. G. Cousins. (London: Allen and Unwin, 2s.) A cautionary guide to the snags, disappointments, compensations and prizes attached to "being in films" in any capacity from boilerman or clerk to director or star. For the purpose of this guide "the film world" does not include documentary or non-theatrical cinema—but perhaps the author feels he has been sufficiently discouraging without adding to his strictures. Anyone with sufficient hardihood to enter films after E. G. Cousins' warnings deserves all the plums he can secure. A most helpful handbook.

PLAYTIME IN RUSSIA. Edited by Hubert Griffeth. (London: Methuen, 6s.) Nine contributors, mostly well-known journalists, none of whom is a Communist, survey the means and scope of entertainment and recreation in Russia to-day. The general tone is one of admiration, sometimes reluctant, mostly spontaneously enthusiastic. Huntly Carter deals with the cinema. In somewhat abstract terms, which may be slightly bewildering to the general reader, he concludes that the cinema in Russia is "a basic human need," "an inner necessity," "an organic part of human society." He describes at some length *Three Songs about Lenin*, which H. G. Wells saw at the same time and was going home to dream about, and *The Miracle*, which provided "evidence of recent æsthetic and technical advance."

PHOTOGRAPHY YEAR BOOK, 1935. Edited by T. Korda. (London: Cosmopolitan Press, 21s.) Though entirely devoted to still photography this collection of 464 pages containing over 1,700 photographs from 522 international contributors, arranged in sections including pictorial, trick, scientific and applied photography, has a considerable interest for film students. If it is sometimes difficult to decide what principle has governed the choice of prints and regrettable that some of the plates have been trimmed for no apparent reason, the diversity of technique as displayed by leading craftsmen of all countries, in lighting, composition and expressiveness, contains a wealth of suggestion for the movie camera-man. Among the full-page reproductions those of Man Ray, Jean Moral, Hoy-niugen-Hueue and Shaw Wildman, as usual, are outstanding for their imagination and originality.



From "Pescados," a Mexican dramatic documentary film of the revolt of the Vera Cruz fishermen against enslaving economic conditions.





From the London Film production "Things to Come" adapted from H. G. Wells. Direction: Cameron Menzies.



THE COLOUR QUESTION

FORSYTH HARDY

IT HAS been a comparatively quiet quarter, despite the excitement over *Becky Sharp*, the puzzle of the Hecht-McArthur film, *The Scoundrel*, the reappearance of the American gangster film in a new form with *G.-Men*, and the intermittent news of progress on the Chaplin film. There is, of course, the fine, firm achievement of *B.B.C.—the Voice of Britain*, and the G.P.O. Unit's film is enough to make any quarter memorable; but, this apart, the immediate future promises to be more attractive than the immediate past has been (a situation not unfamiliar in a cinema which ever murmurs *manana* over unfulfilled promises). The Wells film, *The Masses* (or whatever title Chaplin finally decides upon), Max Reinhardt's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the new *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* by Karl Dreyer and Robert Weine, perhaps London Films' *Conquest of the Air*, and Rene Clair's *The Ghost Goes West*—if these meet reasonable expectations, the film year ought to go out with a flourish.

Colour has been the predominating topic of the quarter. There was very little constructive thinking about sound in the cinema before the production of the first talkie. Equally the appearance of the first major colour film has been preceded by very little serious consideration of the effect, application, and possibilities of colour. It is as well to recognize that we are to have colour not because the movie audience has felt the lack of it and asked for it; not because the craftsmen have mastered the use of sound and are anxious to experiment further; and not because colour has been proved essential to the developing art of the cinema; but because the producers have decided that the entertainment film requires a fresh infusion of novelty. Sound. Now colour. Later some adaptation or exploitation of television. Always the developments have their basis in commercialism. The producers who make them think in terms of box-office appeal, not of æsthetic concepts.

Arguments about the superfluity of sound in the cinema did not silence the talkie. Æsthetic opposition to the coming of colour will not keep films in black-and-white if *Becky Sharp* and its immediate successors succeed at the box-office. Intelligent opposition to colour has been on the expected lines. It is suggested that colour

is an additional temptation for the film merely to copy reality and that the less opportunity there is for divergence from nature, the less justified the film will be in claiming to be an art. To reproduce the apprehension of one critic: "If the cinema is diverted by colour into the mere photography of the pageantry of life or of the costume play, and neglects that significant use of the camera which is its chief title to artistic standing, the new marvel will be as much of a curse as a blessing." But the colour film is not to be condemned after so cursory a trial. There are sufficient occasions in *Becky Sharp* when colour is used dramatically, making a peculiar and otherwise unobtainable contribution to the production, to demonstrate that colour need not be used merely to make film reproduction more accurate and complete.

Becky Sharp was chosen as the first major colour subject, plainly not because of the producer's interest in Thackeray, but because it was admirably suited to show off the new Technicolor palette's range and brilliance. The gay dress of both the men and women of the period, the deep rich tones of the military uniforms, the delicate shades of tapestry and furnishings, and the general love of brightness characteristic of a pre-industrial age—these combined to make a version, however distant, of "Vanity Fair" an attractive proposition for the producer anxious to startle the filmgoer into enthusiasm for colour. Robert Edmund Jones and Rouben Mamoulian, two men with stage and therefore colour experience, have not overlooked their opportunities, and for most of the film they are engaged in decorating the screen in colour that is an almost constant pleasure and a recurring delight. The Duchess of Richmond's ball, however, allows them to do something more. There is a lyrical shot of dancers which improves even on Lubitsch's memorable sequence in *The Merry Widow*. Later, in a scene which is pure fantasy from the historical point of view, the dancers are driven into a panic by the sound of distant guns, and we see as the screen transforms into cold greys and dark blues, that colour can be used most effectively to create atmosphere. The shot of officers, speeding out on their way to battle, their great scarlet cloaks flapping in the wind, has already become something of a classic example of the dramatic use of colour.

It is difficult to give a confident answer to the colour question. Now that colour cinematography of this quality and consistency is scientifically practical, however, its wider adoption is only a question of time. If none of the colour films were worse than *Becky Sharp* we would not need to have any qualms about the new revolution; but less efficient processes and less expert artists will inevitably produce less excellent results. It is a little frightening to imagine what may happen when second-rate art directors are let loose with colour.

Their indiscretions will be literally glaring. In the meantime there is room for much more imaginative experimentation with colour than there is in *Becky Sharp*.

Of all the quarter's films *The Scoundrel* is the most tantalizing. It has the impudent independence, the freedom from the conventionalities and clichés of Hollywood expression which we expect from the Hecht-McArthur-Garmes team; yet it is not content to be merely more sophisticated than the everyday rubber-stamp movie: we are left with the impression that the authors are deliberately, if subtly and cynically, laughing at the vast movie audience. There is no reason why the filmgoer should not go into the pillory when the film-maker has himself gone there (cf. *Once in a Lifetime*). But Hecht and McArthur do not do a straightforward job in satire. If there is a sneer, there is something sly and behindhand about it.

Their film is constructed in two parts. The first is occupied with a young New York publisher, amorous, hard-hearted, cynical, who, with the unconventional and sophisticated writers and artists who are gathered about him, the film invites us to admire. Into the midst of this setting, like a rabbit among foxes, comes a fresh young poetess whose mind is free from the acid of cynicism. The publisher is attracted for a time, but becomes bored and there is tearful separation, during which the poetess curses him, praying that the 'plane in which he is pursuing a lady to Bermuda will crash and that he will die, knowing not a single soul will regret his death. As it is ordered so it is; and at this point comes the sudden change of emphasis in a film in which cynicism and ultra-sophistication have been placed on a pedestal.

A Voice speaks, and orders that he shall spend a month on earth, searching for one person who will weep for him and bring rest to his troubled soul. He moves among his former acquaintances and, in contrast to earlier sneers at simple, moral folk "who are afraid to enjoy life," he now rails at his friends for the smug contentment of their little souls. Eventually, on the last day of his month of grace, he wins salvation through the tears of the young poetess he deserted. What are we to make of this piece of primitive allegory? Are the authors, as Lejeune has suggested, left laughing themselves hoarse at the ethically impregnable solution to their tale? If so, why is the second section played with such intense sincerity? In the first part Noel Coward utters his cynicisms with an easy elegance; but in the second his acting is compelling and the final shot in which, looking reverently upward, he gives thanks for his deliverance, has immense emotional force. Yet earlier, the film, with cynicism as mortar, has been steadily building up in our minds a barrier which stands firm against this metaphysical onslaught.

The Scoundrel has too much wit and ingenuity, however, for it

to be any less than welcomed, despite dubiety over the motive of the producers. Coward, fitting perfectly into the Hecht-McArthur scheme of things, has an important influence on the film (though he claims only one line of dialogue: "H'm! H'm! H'm! That sounds like an epigram"); and Julie Haydon, of *Dawn to Dawn*, is vivid and appealing. The photography is skilful and sensitive, and the dialogue a continued stimulus.

While watching from a distance, and critically, the activities of its rebels, Hollywood has been returning to familiar material with a new cycle of crime pictures. Someone has been suggesting that if all its films could be gangster films, Hollywood's troubles would be over; and certainly most of them are made with a superb bravura. Hollywood appears to understand the gangster, and there is nothing hazy or hesitating about the films devoted to him. In the new cycle the aim is the same as before: to secure for the films excitement, suspense, and violence from the conflict between the forces of law and lawlessness. Gangsters are now less popular than they were, and the new films are designed to glorify the Federal detectives who, under a new Roosevelt law, are allowed to carry guns and use against the gangster his own weapons.

G-Men (Warner Brothers), the first of the cycle, is a swift and exciting film, describing a pitched battle between two organizations, the one working for the preservation and the other for the destruction of society. Violence is the main ingredient of the film, but there are also a skilfully managed and maintained suspense and a feeling of respect for men devoting their lives to hazardous but necessary work. There have also been *Public Hero No. 1* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), a further illustration of a whole nation's warfare against gangsters; *False Faces* (United Artists), a demonstration of the ingenuity of the Federal agents as detectives; and *Car 99* (Paramount), an inside picture of the efficiency of the radio police-car service. Speed, force, vigour, and clarity are qualities common to most of the new crime films which may do something to transfer to the policemen some of the glamour formerly reserved for the gangsters.

As an incidental to the main movie stream, there may be noted briefly in conclusion the steady improvement in the range and make-up of the news-reels which, if they still place unnecessary emphasis on sport and militarism, make more arresting and attractive use of the ten minutes at their disposal than most of the feature films they accompany.

THE CONTINENTALS

IF YOU remember the early Russian films of the *General Line-Turksib* vintage with pleasure and admiration, forget about them when you go to see a modern Russian sound film. This question of right approach to a film is most important. *Le Dernier Milliardaire*, for example, was damned by the critics, because they expected another *Le Million* or an *A Nous la Liberté*, and didn't get it. Had they judged the film on its own merits, they would have given its quality proper recognition. In the same way, on going to see *Nights of St. Petersburg*, all memories of Eisenstein, Turin, Pudovkin and their contemporaries should be dismissed. The Russian directors of to-day have discarded the technique, the tricks, the philosophy even, of their celebrated predecessors. The modern directors are, of course, working in a new medium, and the impact of sound evidently paralysed them for some time. *The Road to Life*, despite photography and sound of the poorest quality, created a tremendous impression because of its virility. After *The Road to Life* there was a long silence, and now we have *Nights of St. Petersburg*, or, in its abbreviated title, *St. Petersburg*.

The film is based on two stories by Dostoievsky, "White Nights" and "Netotchka," and the setting is the Russia of 1860. Igor Efimov, an impoverished musician, is a brilliant violinist and composer. But because his music is "revolutionary" both his playing and his composing are rejected by the conventional public, who award their favours to less gifted musicians whose orthodoxy is more acceptable. Unwilling (unlike most "geniuses") to do a little hack work to feed his family, he becomes poorer and poorer and glummer and glummer until, at the end, he meets, in some unspecified slum quarter, a group of convicts who are singing one of his songs. Then, according to the programme, "he finds recognition with the masses, who understand the symbolism of his music and the message he has written for them."

Inevitably, this is an interesting film, and actually it is not as dull as a bare outline of the plot might lead you to believe. The continuity is good, the photography moderate, and there is no attempt at juggling with sound or cutting. It at least illustrates that technically the Russians have now found their feet in a world of sound and speech, and leads us to hope that having done so, their former virtuosity will return in the course of time. In case it should mean anything in future, it is to be noted that the film was directed by G. Rochal and C. Stroeva. Despite the cumbrous and not conspicuously logical story, the film is definitely worth seeing.

Barcarolle—a Romance in Venice is pleasant enough and has some

good moments in it, as befits a Ufa film. Edwige Feuillere, who will be remembered in *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, plays the wife, and Pierre Richard-Willm, a remarkably handsome young man, takes the part of the gay adventurer who seduces the wife for a bet and falls in love in the process. There are no pyrotechnics, but it is a competent piece of work and few people would walk out on it.

Of the same genre, but infinitely more charming than *Reka*, is *Der Schimmelreiter*, recently seen at the Academy. The title means literally "The Rider on the White Horse," and indeed an element of magic enters the film as soon as the hero buys the white horse from a strange gypsy. There is an old legend that, when *Der Schimmelreiter* appears, death, flood and destruction follow.

The action takes place in a little village on the north coast of Holland, and tells of the hero's struggles to convince the villagers of the advantages, the necessity even, of the construction of a new dyke. The opposition is led by Ole Peters, who coveted both the position of Dyke Master and the girl who became the hero's wife. After plot and counter-plot, the splendid new dyke is erected. Hauke Haien, the hero, directs the work on horseback—that, in fact, of the great white horse he bought when the work began. When the work is finished there is much revelling. Suddenly the celebrations are interrupted. It is raining heavily and floods threaten. The old dyke collapses, and Hauke can only save the village from destruction by cutting a hole in the new dyke and directing the flood in such a manner that it must inevitably overwhelm his own home. This he does, and he and his wife are swept away to destruction. The white horse which Hauke had bought then trots away and vanishes into thin air on the skyline. Thus the legend came true—death, flood and destruction followed *Der Schimmelreiter*.

Despite the tragedy which overwhelms the hero and his wife at the end, this is a very delightful and refreshingly simple story. Many delightful shots of the countryside and of the peasants dancing in their gay costumes are introduced. Matthias Wieman, who will be remembered with pleasure as the traveller in *The Blue Light*, takes the leading part with equal charm and success in this film. Photography and sound are both good and the film deserves to be seen for its beauty and simplicity.

Looking back on the season's Continental films, it must be admitted that, with the exception of *Refugees*, *Remous*, *Hey-Rup*, *Maskerade*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire* and *Der Schimmelreiter*, they have been on the whole an uninspired batch. Few of them have been positively bad, nearly all of them have at least been good entertainment. Yet it cannot be said that any one of them has embodied any significant contribution to cinema. Why is this? The exodus from the German studios does not wholly explain it. Russia's

silence has not caused the studios of the world to stagnate. Is it not that Hollywood and Elstree are now technically on a par with France, Germany and Russia? I think this factor is the one which makes the Continental film seem less remarkable than it did three years ago. Technically the scores are level. The battle is won on content. And it now appears that novelettes are written in France and Germany, just as they are in America and England.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

B.B.C.—THE VOICE OF BRITAIN

Production: G.P.O. Film Unit. Direction: John Grierson, Stuart Legg.

IT WOULD have been easy for a film of the B.B.C. to be a joyless jumble of dull mechanical explanation, self-conscious programme picturization, and solemn sermon on policy. The G.P.O. film is admittedly diverse; but not only is there a plan behind the diversity but an individual approach which is established and maintained. The film dramatizes its material but humanizes it as well, so that its different compartments have vitality and the whole has unity.

Its content may be described as a chronicle of a day's broadcasting in Britain, although it is hardly as naïve as that might suggest. Certainly it starts with an early morning service conducted by the Rev. Dick Sheppard, but its independent character is immediately established as the camera is released to build up with a few quick strokes the placid picture of a listening countryside. The film is always more of an illumination than a summary, and as it reviews the activities at Broadcasting House—routine, preparation, rehearsal, performance—we are not aware of the time-table as the only link but feel drawn into the drama. There is, for example, the S.O.S. message for the mate of a Scottish drifter informing him that his mother is lying dangerously ill at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, which we hear broadcast in the impersonal detached voice of the announcer, and then watch being picked up by the vessel at sea, the message meanwhile rippling on in gently echoed fragments. Again, there is the episode of the two-minute delay in the regional link-up, caused by a Highland village concert running late—an episode which a lively camera and a sensitive microphone, quickly establishing the character of the regional centres, make dramatic and moving. It is this seeing eye of the film which is its outstanding virtue. It operates everywhere, inside Broadcasting House as well as outside, ranging the panorama of a listening Britain. Only in the children's hour sequence is it oddly clouded with artificiality. Towards the end of the film come the faces of the representative great men—the politicians, kept silent; Wells, Chesterton, Shaw, Low, and Priestley heard in characteristic phrase.

The complete forum of the G.P.O. directors worked on the film and, while the influence of John Grierson is always apparent in its penetrating approach and perceptive treatment, it is possible occasionally to detect individual styles. Camera and microphone are used with masterly freedom and the regional station sequence, attributed to Evelyn Spice, is a notable example of the unself-conscious union of sight and sound. A special credit goes to Stuart Legg, who organized, unified, and did much to weld together the mass of semi-related fragments.

The Voice of Britain, the most ambitious of the G.P.O. Unit's films, is a solid and successful achievement, the product of insight, initiative, and enthusiasm.

F. H.

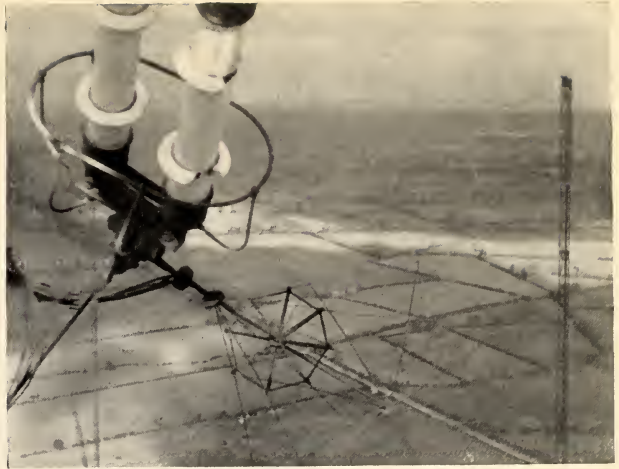
BLACK FURY

Production: Warner. Direction: Michael Curtiz with Paul Muni and Karen Morley. Length: 7591 feet.

WHY Warner Brothers, profitably engaged in the manufacture of melodramas and leg-shows, should turn and grapple on a plane of high seriousness with a social evil, as they did once before in *I Am a Fugitive*, is one of the minor mysteries of American filmmaking. Whatever prompted it, we must be grateful for this gallant flight from unreality to Coaltown and salute an honesty that makes no attempt to disguise the dreariness of the miners' row.

The setting is Pennsylvania, but the atmosphere of industrial squalor created by the faithful documenting of pit shafts, strikers' processions, groups of haggard women and children on doorsteps, cheap pubs. and protest meetings in smoky halls differs little from that of British and Continental black countries. One element localizes it—the diversity of the miners' racial origin. Joe Radek, a part which Paul Muni with his peasant's physiognomy is ideally fitted to interpret, stands for that pathetic mass of semi-illiterates, a generation or so removed from the soil of Continental fields, who support the complex fabric of American civilization by their labour in Uncle Sam's mines and factories. It is a type worth representing on the screen, and Muni's portrait has a stark verisimilitude beside which most of the others appear artificial and shadowy. The strike-bearing racketeers and mine-owners are, for example, mere puppets conveniently introduced to assist the development of the plot.

Most mining films (among them such a notable contribution to peace propaganda as *Kameradschaft*) take the line of least resistance and make their highlight a pit disaster. *Black Fury* digs its drama from material which at first sight looks as intractable as



From "B.B.C.—The Voice of Britain," a John Grierson Production.

Courtesy G.P.O. Films and H.M. Stationery Office.



From "Wonders of Flying," a
Terra film featuring Ernest Udet,
remarkable for its thrills and photography



the rock from which its miners quarry their coal—the long-drawn misery of a lockout. True, there is a concession to melodrama in the last reel, when the hero brings men and masters to terms by barricading himself in the mine with enough dynamite to blow it sky high; but the film does make a devious attempt to express what is above all characteristic of a mine strike—the flat monotony of days passed in futile negotiation.

Upon the larger drama of the lockout is superimposed the personal tragedy of Radek's desertion by the girl he had expected to marry. Except in so far as it reveals his character it hardly matters, and both her penitent return to him in the interests of a happy ending and his ready forgiveness of her lapse do violence to psychological probability. Though not, on the whole, up to the standard of *I Am a Fugitive*, this film has definite importance as an index of America's increasing absorption with her sociological problems.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS (*British. G.-B.*). The main plot of John Buchan's novel remains, with many of the individual situations, the Scottish setting and the hero, Richard Hannay; but the story has been thoroughly modernized and a light romantic element introduced. Alfred Hitchcock, with Ian Hay and Wyndham Lewis, have done much to translate speech into action, and the film from the first foot is action. He tells the story clearly and convincingly and the wildly melodramatic moments are in part offset by such well observed sequences as the Scottish political meeting, the Forth Bridge episode, and the discreetly managed scene in the inn bedroom. Robert Donat plays Hannay with an attractive spirit and humour. A blot on the film for Scotsmen is the unconvincing charge of meanness directed at a Scottish crofter.

F. H.

THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN (*American. Paramount*). Josef von Sternberg's new film demonstrates most clearly that the director has died and become a photographer. It is at once a most beautiful and an empty film. To Sternberg every shot is something to fondle and caress, a composition to linger over and tirelessly titivate. Even the shot of a letter must have a shadowy pattern across it. If only it were possible to close the mind the eye could gorge itself on this surface splendour; but the inanities of the cheap charade in the background continually interrupt. The film stars Marlene Dietrich, and, like that exotic lady, is a masterpiece of the toilette; but it is lacking in every virtue which made Sternberg a director of promise.

F. H.

LES MISERABLES (*American. Twentieth Century*). Two aspects of this fifth or sixth version of Hugo's novel call for comment: W. P. Lipscomb's masterly compression of the theme and Laughton's performance as Javert. Lipscomb has selected most of the essentials and assembled them skilfully, so that while the film has little time to linger for fine effects, it gets over the narrative ground briskly and satisfactorily. And the scenario seems to have suited the directorial style of Richard Boleslavsky who brings the story to the screen in broad, sweeping strokes. The strength of Laughton's performance makes this film more than other versions a conflict between Javert and Jean Valjean. With studied power, he brings this inhuman bully, obsessed with the sacredness of the law, to life and the final moment of his struggle and submission is the most moving in the film. Frederic Marsh's Valjean is competent, but scarcely inspired, and Cedric Hardwicke's restrained performance as the Bishop Bienvenu is over too soon.

F.H.

FILM SOCIETIES

DURING the summer months the film societies movement is in a state of suspended activity. Councils and officials, however, are busy preparing programmes for the coming season, and many new groups are planning campaigns to establish societies in untapped areas.

Among the districts which will have new societies commencing operations in the autumn are Torquay, Wolverhampton, Ayrshire, Ipswich, Dundee, St. Andrews, Plymouth, and Maidenhead.

The secretary of the MAIDENHEAD FILM SOCIETY is P. J. Chippingdale Watsham, 31 High Street, Maidenhead. Ten performances will be given on Sunday afternoons in the Rialto. The subscription will be 20s., and a membership of 600 is aimed at. It is also hoped to form a similar society in Reading.

The headquarters of the PLYMOUTH FILM SOCIETY will be at Virginia House, where standard sound apparatus has been installed. The objects are to give performances of outstanding films from all countries, to support the exhibition of worth-while entertainment and educational pictures, and to support special exhibitions for children. The chairman is John Case, and the secretary is Martin Atkinson.

Gordon C. Hales, 36 Constable Road, Ipswich, is secretary of the IPSWICH FILM SOCIETY, which in addition to giving private performances intends to organize lectures, to produce experimental and documentary films, and to establish a library of film books.

The secretary of the TORQUAY FILM SOCIETY is C. M. Rowe, Warbro Way, Brixham Road, Paignton, and of the DUNDEE FILM SOCIETY, G. E. Geddes, Scotswood, Wormit, Dundee.

The annual report of the TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY (hon. sec., M. C. Pottinger, Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) shows that a membership of 771 has been achieved. With a programme of seven Sunday evening performances, three displays of 16 mm. films, and two children's matinees, and a financial balance of over £10, the society may compliment itself on a very successful season.

The report of the LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY (hon. sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College, Leicester) shows that this progressive society, founded in 1931, was in a strong enough financial position to give an extra seventh performance without additional charge to members.

A proposal to institute a special membership fee of one guinea in order to hold private performances similar to those of other film societies was not favoured by the members of the MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, and it has been decided to retain the former subscription of 2s. 6d., which includes receipt of a monthly bulletin and the right to purchase tickets for special performances from time to time. A series of lectures on individual directors and producing units is being prepared and a junior society for school-children is being formed. The hon. sec. is J. A. Parker, Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool 1.

The EDINBURGH FILM GUILD has removed to new premises at 11 N. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh 2. The following office-bearers have been appointed for the ensuing season: Hon. President, Professor Talbot Rice; Hon. Vice-Presidents, Edwin Muir and Ian Whyte; Chairman, Norman Wilson; Hon. sec., Sheila A. C. Smith; Hon-Films sec., J. C. H. Dunlop; Hon. treas., F. C. P. Maclauchlan.

News of the film societies will be fully reported in forthcoming issues of the new *World Film News and Cinema Quarterly*. Programmes, announcements and reports should be addressed to Cinema Contact Ltd., 24 N.W. Thistle Street Lane, Edinburgh 2.

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FOR

"Sanders of the River"

SUNDAY TIMES:—"Korda has produced a picture which merits him ranking as a K.B.E. It is an epic of Empire."

THE TIMES:—"Sanders of the River' is extremely good. Brilliant pictures of river and forest and native ceremonial."

DAILY TELEGRAPH:—"Sanders of the River' is a British film triumph. The picture is magnificently acted."

THE OBSERVER:—"Sanders' will provide a topic of conversation for every dinner-table in London. People will talk about it till the cows come home."

MORNING POST:—"Seldom has the screen provided such a feast of adventure."

DAILY MAIL:—"Sanders of the River' is breaking every record known at the Leicester Square Theatre, and there is no reason why it should not continue to do so for many weeks to come. A vigorous and marvellous entertainment."

DAILY EXPRESS:—"An amazing achievement. A remarkable film. At times it rises to the emotion of an epic of Empire."

DAILY HERALD:—"In some respects 'Sanders of the River' is the most notable British film yet made. It is a landmark for British studios. Indescribably thrilling."

THE PEOPLE:—"Easily the best film made this side of the Atlantic."

NEWS CHRONICLE:—"A splendid achievement."

DAILY SKETCH:—"A film that may be seen many times with enjoyment."

SUNDAY PICTORIAL:—"(**4 STARS**) Perhaps the success of 'Sanders' may encourage our producers to turn their eyes towards the many striking themes with which life in the Empire abounds. Leslie Banks was so real that he made me forget I was looking at a film drama. I think his performance one of the best I have ever seen in films."

SUNDAY GRAPHIC:—"(**4 STARS**) A magnificent achievement. Leslie Banks gives a superb performance. This is a magnificent film."

SUNDAY CHRONICLE:—"A mammoth production. Casting sheer inspiration. I am sure that if Edgar Wallace were alive to-day, he would step right up to Leslie Banks and say 'Hullo, Sanders!' Paul Robeson is magnificent in more ways than one."

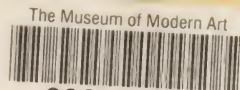
EVENING STANDARD:—"London Film Productions have undoubtedly started another film 'cycle'."

THE STAR:—"Alexander Korda, of London Films, has produced another winner with 'Sanders of the River.' One cannot imagine how it could have been done better."

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